

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

ORDERING THE UNRULY CITY: NEGOTIATING POLICING AND CITIZENSHIP IN
MEXICO CITY, c.1870-1950

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KEEGAN BOYAR

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the history of relations between the police and the broader population in Mexico City in the period c.1870-1950. Against interpreting policing as a state-centric disciplinary project, it traces how the negotiation of police power became crucial to the informal ordering of the city in multiple registers. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the organization of public order in Mexico City underwent tremendous changes, as authorities expanded the reach of regulations and modernized the police force. These developments dramatically changed the making of public order and the relationship between citizenship and the ordering of the city. In practice, police authority was negotiated by various actors—city officials, the capital’s residents, and police themselves—on uneven terrain that shifted with changing political, social, and institutional contexts, generating regularized but informal forms of order driven by extralegal power, patron-client relationships, and the selective application of law. Using court records, administrative files, and newspapers, this dissertation examines how city residents sought to strategically employ or contest police power and criminal law, as well as tracing how police working conditions and the disjuncture between law and material conditions fostered the negotiation of regulations on public space. It further shows how these practices changed over time, especially owing to institutional changes in the police, including professionalization, specialization, and the development of private and semi-private police organizations. The negotiation of policing simultaneously allowed many city residents the chance to defend their livelihoods and sociabilities, while reinforcing their unequal and contingent integration into the city, their limited access to citizenship rights, and their vulnerability to violence. By focusing on questions of discretion, violence, and extralegal uses of police power, this dissertation highlights their centrality to the construction and maintenance of

informal, negotiated means of ordering the city, and in doing so, sheds light on citizenship and its limits in Mexico City in the era.

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Introduction

From the late nineteenth century onward, the making of public order in Mexico City underwent tremendous changes. City and federal officials sought to expand the reach of laws, regulations, and centralized police authority in the name of modernization. Regulations increasingly sought to crack down on common practices that were held to be incompatible with a modern city, the police force was significantly expanded and reorganized, and new criminal and criminal procedural codes sought to establish a framework for the new punitiveness and reconcile it with notions of rights. By all accounts, these efforts failed. By the middle of the twentieth century, despite recurrent cycles of reform, the police force was notorious for its violent abuses, apparent inefficacy, and ingrained corruption, the judicial system was widely distrusted, and regulations on public space and activities often seemed to be more honored in the breach than in practice. Yet these institutions nonetheless dramatically shaped the making of public order, albeit in ways that were often far removed from the stated intentions of legislators and laws.

This dissertation examines policing to argue that the ordering of Mexico City, from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, depended fundamentally on the negotiation of police authority. It shows that policing was negotiated by various actors—city officials, the capital’s diverse residents, and police themselves—in ways that generated their own forms of informal order, based less on law itself than on its selective application, extralegal power, and pervasive street-level clientelism. Although it may seem strange to term this a form of order, given how it depended on the bending of the law as much as its enforcement, on patronage and protection more than legal equality, it nonetheless constituted a fairly regular structure with common expectations and practices that generated a degree of

governability. The spread of police authority through the capital was never absolute—although neither was it negotiated on even terms—but it depended on a fragile web of strategic alliances, coercion, and corruption. The terrain of this informal ordering shifted over time with changing institutional, political, and social contexts, shaping and reshaping the negotiation of police authority as the city grew and the Porfirian government gave way to the (post)revolutionary state. Ultimately, the maintenance of such arrangements of overlapping public and private forms of power became entrenched in urban governance and the workings of the state. The negotiation of policing simultaneously allowed many residents the chance to defend their livelihoods, sociabilities, and private lives, while reinforcing their unequal and contingent integration into the city and their vulnerability to police violence. By examining how policing worked in the city, and the forms of order—fragile, conditional, and dependent on a level of normalized quotidian violence and insecurity—that it fostered, this dissertation sheds light on the limits and practices of citizenship in modern Mexico City.

It is only in recent years that scholars have begun to study in detail the history of policing in Mexico, or, for that matter, the history of criminal justice systems more broadly in Latin America. As several historians have noted, the experience of authoritarian governments in Latin America (whether the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone or Mexico's *dictablanda*) left many observers with the view that institutions like the police and courts essentially operated as coercive instruments of top-down state control, and that they therefore were not particularly propitious topics of study.¹ In more recent years, impelled in part by the regional post-

¹ On the reasons behind the limited attention given by historians to police, specifically, see: Lila Caimari, *While the City Sleeps: A History of Pistoleros, Policemen, and the Crime Beat in Buenos Aires before Perón* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 9; Carlos A. Pérez Ricart, “La temprana (y permanente) militarización de la seguridad pública en México: un estudio histórico,” *Contextualizaciones Latinoamericanas* 10, no. 19 (December 2018): 2; Diane E. Davis, “Historia de detectives: rastreando a la policía de la capital en la

authoritarian shift to “disjunctive” democracies characterized by high rates of violence and the disconnect between expansive proclamations of rights and a harsher reality, and in part by the cultural turn’s interest in power and subject formation, historians increasingly turned their attention to questions of crime, law, and public order.² A wave of scholars, examining Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, produced valuable works on the history of crime and law, courts and prisons, and, in some cases (perhaps somewhat less so in Mexico than in Brazil) the police.³

As they have shown, fears of crime and urban disorder became especially acute in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, stemming from a combination of urban growth and ever-more-visible poverty, the dictates of export economies in which cities figured as key nodes in networks of international capital, and elites’ pursuit of a particular vision of modernity

historiografía política de México,” in *Los últimos cien años, los próximos cien...*, ed. Ariel Rodríguez Kuri and Sergio Tamayo Flores-Alatorre (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2004), 72–74. On law and courts, see: Gilbert M. Joseph, “Preface,” in *Crime and Punishment in Latin America: Law and Society since Late Colonial Times*, ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre, and Gilbert M. Joseph (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), ix–x. On the term “dictablanda”: Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, eds., *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

² On the “disjunctions” of post-authoritarian Brazil, see: James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

³ For several representative examples, see: Lyman Johnson, ed., *The Problem of Order in Changing Societies: Essays on Crime and Policing in Argentina and Uruguay, 1750-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990); Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre, eds., *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Essays in Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1996); Ricardo D. Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre, and Gilbert M. Joseph, eds., *Crime and Punishment in Latin America: Law and Society since Late Colonial Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001); Carlos Aguirre and Robert M. Buffington, eds., *Reconstructing Criminality in Latin America* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000); Sueann Caulfield, Sarah C. Chambers, and Lara Putnam, eds., *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005); Claudia Agostoni and Elisa Speckman Guerra, eds., *De normas y transgresiones: enfermedad y crimen en América Latina, 1850-1950* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005). The Mexican literature will be discussed in more detail below. Works from this wave on policing in Brazil include: Thomas Holloway, *Policing Rio de Janeiro: Repression and Resistance in a 19th-Century City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Elizabeth Cancelli, *O mundo da violência: a polícia da era Vargas* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1993); Marcos Luiz Bretas, *A guerra das ruas: povo e polícia na cidade do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1997); Marcos Luiz Bretas, *Ordem na cidade: o exercício cotidiano da autoridade policial no Rio de Janeiro: 1907-1930* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Rocco Ltda., 1997).

(whether that was, in Mexico's case, Porfirian or postrevolutionary, although scholars have noted extensive continuities between the two regarding law and crime). Criminology, which emerged to offer a means of understanding perceived disorder and the challenges of modernization, served in part to naturalize inequalities on a racial and class basis, associating the lower classes with criminality and unfitness for full citizenship through a combination of racial and environmental explanations for crime. Legal codes were drafted (and redrafted) to reshape the relationship between state and society, and "modern" police forces were founded and given wide powers to identify purported criminals.⁴

Developments in the Mexican capital were similar to those elsewhere. In Mexico City, the creation of the Gendarmería Municipal city police force in 1879 was part of a broader wave of new institutions that, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sought to expand the reach of public authority and reshape the relationship between the state and society. The country's first penal code was promulgated in 1871, and soon followed by penal procedural codes, to rationalize criminal law and the functioning of courts; a sanitary code was implemented in 1891, to give authorities greater tools to reshape the urban fabric; the first penitentiary was

⁴ Besides the works in the previous footnote, see: Lila Caimari, *Apenas un delincuente: crimen, castigo, y cultura en la Argentina, 1880-1955* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, Argentina s.a., 2004); Carlos Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds: The Prison Experience, 1850-1935* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005); Dain Borges, "'Puffy, Ugly, Slothful and Inert': Degeneration in Brazilian Social Thought, 1880-1940," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 2 (May 1993): 235-56; Daniel Palma Alvarado, ed., *Delincuentes, policías y justicias: América Latina, siglos XIX y XX* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2015); Diego Galeano, *Delincuentes viajeros: estafadores, punguistas y policías en el Atlántico sudamericano* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2018); Luz E. Huertas, Bonnie A. Lucero, and Gregory J. Swedberg, eds., *Voices of Crime: Constructing and Contesting Social Control in Modern Latin America* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2016); Gema Santamaría and David Carey Jr., eds., *Violence and Crime in Latin America: Representations and Politics* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017); Elisa Speckman Guerra, *Horrorosísimos crímenes y ejemplares castigos: una historia sociocultural del crimen, la justicia y el castigo (México, siglos XIX y XX)* (San Luis Potosí: El Colegio de San Luis, A.C., 2018). On Mexico, see: Buffington; Uriás Horcasitas *Indígena y criminal*; Piccato *City of Suspects*; Speckman Guerra *Crimen y castigo*; Piccato and Buffington; Speckman Guerra *Horrorosísimos crímenes*; Santillán Esqueda; Dávalos etc *Orden, policía y seguridad*.

constructed in 1900 to allow for purportedly regenerative punishment; and countless minor decrees and regulations sought to expand control over public spaces and public behaviors.⁵ At the same time, changing ideas about crime increasingly targeted specific groups of the urban population for harsher punitive measures, of which the new police force was a central part.⁶ The 1879 Gendarmería was not the city's first professional, centralized, "modern" police force—such institutions had been the dominant way of organizing order and security in the capital for decades, and had coexisted alongside other means of maintaining order since the late colonial period.⁷ But it did mark an important development, given its large size and simple institutional

⁵ On criminal law, policing, and the broader regulation of public spaces and behaviors in Mexico City during this era, see: Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001); Elisa Speckman Guerra, *Crimen y castigo: legislación penal, interpretaciones de la criminalidad y administración de justicia, Ciudad de México, 1872-1910* (México: El Colegio de México; Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002); Elisa Speckman Guerra, *Del Tigre de Santa Julia, la princesa italiana y otras historias: sistema judicial, criminalidad y justicia en la ciudad de México (Siglos XIX y XX)* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Penales, 2014); Ricardo Pérez Montfort, ed., *Hábitos, normas y escándalo: prensa, criminalidad y drogas durante el porfiriato tardío* (México: Plaza y Valdés Editores, 1997); James Alex Garza, *The Imagined Underworld: Sex, Crime, and Vice in Porfirian Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Salvador Cárdenas Gutiérrez and Elisa Speckman Guerra, eds., *Crimen y justicia en la historia de México: nuevas miradas* (México: Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación, 2011); Laurence John Rohlfes, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City, 1876-1911: A Study of Order and Progress in Porfirian Mexico" (Ph.D. Dissertation, History, Tulane University, 1983); Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2003); Mario Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles: subsistencia y negociación política en la ciudad de México a comienzos del siglo XX* (México: El Colegio de México, 2008); Katherine Elaine Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Susie S. Porter, "'And That It Is Custom Makes It Law': Class Conflict and Gender Ideology in the Public Sphere, Mexico City, 1880-1910," *Social Science History* 24, no. 1, Special Issue: The Working Classes and Urban Public Space (Spring 2000): 111–48; Odette María Rojas Sosa, "La ciudad y sus peligros: alcohol, crimen y bajos fondos. Visiones, discursos y práctica judicial, 1929-1946" (Ph.D. Dissertation, History, México, UNAM, 2016).

⁶ Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Beatriz Urías Horcasitas, *Indígena y criminal: Interpretaciones del derecho y la antropología en México, 1871-1921* (Mexico City: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2000); Speckman Guerra, *Crimen y castigo*; Piccato, *City of Suspects*; Marcela Dávalos, Regina Hernández Franyuti, and Diego Pulido Esteva, eds., *Orden, policía y seguridad: historia de las ciudades* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2017).

⁷ Diego Pulido Esteva, "Policía: del buen gobierno a la seguridad, 1750-1850," *Historia Mexicana* 60, no. 3 (March 2011): 1595–1642; Diego Pulido Esteva, "Después del alcalde de barrio: experiencias policiales en la Ciudad de México (1824-1861)," *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, June 6, 2017; Jorge Nacif Mina, "Policía y seguridad pública en la ciudad de México, 1770-1848.," in *La Ciudad de México en la primera mitad del Siglo XIX*, ed. Regina Hernández Franyuti, vol. II (México: Instituto Mora, 1994), 9–50; José Antonio Serrano Ortega, "Los virreyes del barrio: alcaldes auxiliares y seguridad pública, 1820-1840," in *Institución y ciudad: Ocho estudios*

stability, compared with the usually small and short-lived earlier institutions, as well as the prominent role it played as city authorities sought to use the police to shape urban life to a much greater extent than previously. To take one crude measurement: the number of arrests skyrocketed, such that police made some 132,918 arrests for public drunkenness alone in 1907, at which point the city held a population of nearly 470,000 (although many of those arrested would have been recidivists).⁸ As historian Pablo Piccato has argued, the Porfiriato witnessed “the most aggressive era of authoritarian punishment in the country’s history.”⁹

Yet histories of crime, law, and the ordering of the city in Latin America have often struggled with how to frame these developments. Tested against notions of social control and a modernizing disciplinary state, Latin American states have often seemed to come up short. Laws and regulations that subjected the lower and working classes to state intervention may have often been framed in such terms, but were frequently heavily debated by legislators, administrators, and criminologists—consensus was often elusive and there was no totalizing state vision.¹⁰ Popular notions of crime often differed sharply from those expressed by law, and at times, the wider population took up laws and new institutions in ways that differed significantly from

históricos sobre la Ciudad de México, ed. Carlos Illades and Ariel Rodríguez Kuri (México: Unidad Obrera y Socialista, 2000), 21–60.

⁸ On arrests: Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 163, Table IV-7. The 1910 Census gave a city population of just over 470,000, and it was undoubtedly somewhat less in 1907.

⁹ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 5.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Elisa Speckman Guerra on discussions around Mexican Penal Codes, and Katherine Bliss on the debates over how to regulate prostitution: Speckman Guerra, *Crimen y castigo*, pts. 2–3; Elisa Speckman Guerra, “La época de la codificación: los ordenamientos de 1871, 1929 y 1931,” in *Del Tigre de Santa Julia, la princesa italiana y otras historias: Sistema judicial, criminalidad y justicia en la ciudad de México (Siglos XIX y XX)* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Penales, 2014), 19–43; Bliss, *Compromised Positions*. Similarly, deflowering laws were strenuously debated in Brazil: Sueann Caulfield, *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).

legislators' intentions.¹¹ New penal institutions utterly failed to live up to reformers' lofty promises of social regeneration, and instead were underfunded, overcrowded, and served to reinforce traditional social hierarchies rather than to modernize subjects.¹² The reach of public authorities—including the police—was often limited not only by lack of resources or consensus, but also by the practical impossibility of enforcing many regulations and laws that would have functionally overturned structural patterns of urban life.¹³ In short, creating modern subjects and disciplining the purportedly unruly lower classes may have been a stated aim of many laws and regulations, but that aim was never voiced unequivocally, and the quotidian practices of ordering were often far removed from the dictates of the law.¹⁴

Indeed, the actions of police themselves often challenged the very idea, enshrined in numerous laws and regulations, that the police were to act to straightforwardly enforce laws

¹¹ On contested notions of crime, see: Piccato, *City of Suspects*, chaps. 4–6. On popular uses of law: historians have especially noted how laws around honor were widely taken up in ways that legislators did not necessarily anticipate. See: Pablo Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion: Honor in the Construction of the Mexican Public Sphere* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), chap. 6; Caulfield, *In Defense of Honor*; Caulfield, Chambers, and Putnam, *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America*. Susana Sosenski has also discussed how working- and lower-class parents attempted to use the Tribunal para Menores (juvenile court) as a resource, at times in ways quite different from those imagined by the Tribunal's designers. Susana Sosenski, *Niños en acción: el trabajo infantil en la ciudad de México (1920-1934)* (México: El Colegio de México, 2010), 288–93.

¹² Salvatore and Aguirre, *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America*, 1996; Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima*; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, chap. 8; Diego Pulido Esteva, *Las Islas Mariás: historia de una colonia penal* (Ciudad de México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2017). In this, Latin American penal institutions seemed to contrast with the ideal of modern prison systems that purportedly sought to instill factory work discipline, in Melossi and Pavarini's argument, or the broader self-control of the modern subject, as Foucault argued. Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the Penitentiary System*, 40th Anniversary Edition (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977). It may be asked whether Latin American penal institutions were unique in this regard.

¹³ There are numerous examples of this. For examples dealing with housing, sanitation, and regulations on public spaces, see: Brodwyn Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pts. 1, 4; Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, chaps. 4–5.

¹⁴ This pattern was not unique to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; historians of the colonial era have long viewed the disjuncture between law and practice as a constitutive feature of Iberian colonial rule that allowed for the reconciliation of divergent interests. See: John Lynch, "The Institutional Framework of Colonial Spanish America," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (1992): 69–81.

equally across all citizens. Scholars of Brazilian policing, in particular, perhaps due to the influence of Gilberto Freyre and the presence of slavery in Brazil well into the late nineteenth century, have often drawn attention to the unsteady boundary between private and public power. As historians like Thomas Holloway, Marcos Luiz Bretas, Amy Chazkel, and Brodwyn Fischer have argued, the ordering of Rio de Janeiro was not marked by legal equality, but by the propping up of private logics of power via clientelism and discretion. For the politically powerful, the police looked the other way or took bribes, while the rest of the population was subjected to regularized coercion and abuses—practices which in turn shaped how city dwellers sought to use such institutions.¹⁵ Held up against ideals of professionalism, including technical training and the dispassionate enforcement of the law equally for all citizens, police in Mexico and elsewhere never seemed to measure up, being characterized by poor training and morale, widespread abuses, endemic corruption, and routinized extralegal violence—patterns that continued into the twentieth century.¹⁶ Indeed, many early studies of policing’s history in

¹⁵ Holloway, *Policing Rio de Janeiro*; Bretas, *A guerra das ruas*; Bretas, *Ordem na cidade*; Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, pt. 3; Amy Chazkel, *Laws of Chance: Brazil’s Clandestine Lottery and the Making of Urban Public Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011). Perhaps the main interpretive debate in this literature has to do with the matter of popular responses to policing. While earlier scholars (most notably Holloway) argued that policing generated widespread resistance, more recent scholars (expressed most forcefully by Chazkel) have de-emphasized resistance to argue for a wider range of coercion and consent.

The Brazilian literature on policing has gone further than most in drawing out these intertwined public-private logics. In contrast, the Argentine literature on police history, which has often been marked for the search for the origins of the massive political repression and violence of the Dirty War, has tended to place more emphasis on the institutional construction of a practically unaccountable police force, although the presence of corruption has received some attention. Caimari, *While the City Sleeps*; Galeano, *Delincuentes viajeros*; Pedro Berardi, “Los procesos de profesionalización en la policía de la provincia de Buenos Aires en épocas de cambio (fines del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX),” *Trashumante. Revista Americana de Historia Social*, no. 17 (2021): 104–24; Osvaldo Barreneche, *De brava a dura: Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires: una historia (1930-1970)* (Rosario: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2019).

¹⁶ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 41–45; Diego Pulido Esteva, “Profesional y discrecional: policía y sociedad en la ciudad de México del Porfiriato tardío a la posrevolución,” *Antropología. Revista interdisciplinaria del INAH* 94 (April 2012): 72–85; Diego Pulido Esteva, “Los negocios de la policía en la ciudad de México durante la posrevolución,” *Trashumante: Revista Americana de Historia Social*, no. 6 (2015): 8–31; Diego Pulido Esteva, “El caso Quintana: policías, periodistas y hampones en la capital mexicana de los años veinte,” in *Delincuentes, policías y justicias: América Latina, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Daniel Palma Alvarado (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2015), 312–29; Diego Pulido Esteva, “Trabajo, clase y prácticas policiales en las comisarías de la

Mexico emphasized the distance between modern ideal and grim reality as a means of highlighting the profound inequities barely hidden by Porfirian Mexico's mask of modernization.¹⁷

The temptation to frame the history of policing in Mexico as one of failed modernity is obvious. As discussed in Chapter Two, it follows a longstanding pattern set by Mexican critics from the 1870s onward, who, in the discourse of failed police modernity, found a rhetorically appealing narrative with which to explain contemporary problems and to offer political critiques. Yet historians should be wary of such narratives for the hidden assumptions they contain. If, as has been argued, there is often a tendency for histories of places outside of Europe to be interpreted through lenses formed in and through the study of European history, such that “all

ciudad de México, 1870-1920,” *Historia Mexicana* 68, no. 2 (270) (October 2018): 667–712; Rocio Andrea Castillo Garza, “La imagen del policía de la Ciudad de México en el Porfiriato” (Tesis de Licenciatura, México, UNAM, 2010); Alejandro Ponce Hernández, “La gestión de un nuevo orden: reforma, profesionalización y problemáticas de la policía de la ciudad de México: 1923-1928” (Tesis de Licenciatura, México, D.F., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2018); Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City”; Pedro Santoni, “La policía de la Ciudad de México durante el Porfiriato: los primeros años (1876-1884),” *Historia Mexicana* 33, no. 1 (September 1983): 97–129. On the midcentury, see: Pablo Piccato, *A History of Infamy: Crime, Truth, and Justice in Mexico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 114–25; Pablo Piccato, “A Historical Perspective on Crime in Twentieth-Century Mexico City,” in *Reforming the Administration of Justice in Mexico*, ed. Wayne A. Cornelius and David A. Shirk (Notre Dame, Indiana, and La Jolla, California: University of Notre Dame Press and Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 2007), 65–89; Elisa Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio: justicia penal, homicidios célebres y opinión pública (México, siglo XX)* (México: Tirant Lo Blanch; Universidad Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2020), 180–84.

There is an extensive literature on the continuation of these issues into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, in large part due less to the drug war than to the disjunction between the promises of democratization and the reality of a largely unaccountable police force. For example: Beatriz Martínez de Murguía, *La policía en México: ¿Orden social o criminalidad?* (Mexico City: Planeta, 1998); Elena Azaola Garrido, *Imagen y autoimagen de la policía de la Ciudad de México* (México: Ediciones Coyoacán, 2006); Elena Azaola Garrido, *Investigadores de papel: poder y derechos humanos entre la Policía Judicial de la Ciudad de México* (México: Distribuciones Fontamara, 2009); Daniel M. Sabet, *Police Reform in Mexico: Informal Politics and the Challenge of Institutional Change* (Stanford: Stanford Politics and Policy, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2012).

¹⁷ Paul J. Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development*, Revised and Enlarged Edition (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1992); Santoni, “La policía de la Ciudad de México durante el Porfiriato”; Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City”; José Arturo Yáñez Romero, *Policía mexicana: cultura política, (in)seguridad y orden público en el gobierno del Distrito Federal, 1821-1876* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, 1999); Jacinto Barrera Bassols, *El caso Villavicencio: violencia y poder en el Porfiriato* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2016).

these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe,’” then the common narrative of failed police modernity in Mexico turns the history of policing in Mexico into a rather dismal variation on a European (or Euro-American) narrative of police development as (ideally) one of expanding state capacity and technological specialization increasingly organized around crime control.¹⁸ Doing so may have been a potent rhetorical tool for critics, but risks missing how policing in Mexico—and, certainly, other countries as well—has historically operated. It further obscures, rather than clarifies, the concept of modernity, by drawing a hard dichotomy between the modern and the traditional (and related binaries such as public/private or formal/informal) rather than acknowledging that modernity has everywhere entailed varied configurations and mixings of the two, and that ostensibly “anti-modern” forms—such as widespread urban informality—have often developed most strongly, and underwent historical changes, in the “modern” era, rather than being simply stable remnants of pre-existing forms.¹⁹ At the same time, narratives of incomplete modernization underpin commonsense assumptions about the police problem in the present day. Blaming today’s police abuses, corruption, extralegality, and violence on their longstanding embeddedness in police practices is not wrong, exactly, but misses the question of why these issues became so embedded in policing in the first place, what forms of order they propped up, how they worked for different actors, and how they developed over time.²⁰

¹⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Revised Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 27. Relatedly, Jennifer Robinson has criticized how urban studies have often portrayed a stark divide between Euro-American cities and cities elsewhere, and has called for erasing these boundaries to better understand ordinary urban uniqueness. See: Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁹ For a critique of the “incomplete modernity” framing through the Brazilian perspective, see: Teresa P.R. Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 140–45, 157.

²⁰ Due in part to the drug war, interest in police reform has grown in recent years. A common feature of many policy-oriented works is the assumption that setting Mexican policing on the right “modern” track by implementing

Taking these questions seriously requires a deeper look at the workings of the police and the making of informal structures of order in Mexico City over a long time span, examining both institutional developments and wider society. As this dissertation shows, police professionalization efforts—notably the 1917 division of the police into investigative and preventive forces, and the 1923 foundation of a police academy—did little to stem abuses or bribery. Nonetheless, they increasingly turned policing into a career and improved cohesion within the police force after the Revolution, deepening the role of extralegal practices. Porfirian policing was a short-term job that most gendarmes cycled in and out of quickly, feeling so little attachment to the institution or their coworkers that disputes were frequent and it was relatively common for gendarmes to testify against each other. After the Revolution, gendarmes increasingly made a career out of policing and became ever-more cohesive and organized as an institution: police became less likely to testify against each other, fostering an institutional culture of normalized extralegal practices, while the locus of conflict shifted to between the city’s growing number of police forces as they clashed over the control of jurisdictions and lucrative protection rackets. Meanwhile, modernization efforts had relatively little impact on changing the basic shape of policing from 1879 to 1950. While reformers implemented motorcycle squadrons in the years after the Revolution, and patrol cars in the early 1940s, both forces were small, and the vast majority of policing continued to take place through foot

supposedly universal best practices at the institutional level will resolve the problem. To pick one example: Daniel Sabet’s 2012 work *Police Reform in Mexico*, written in what in hindsight can be called the early years of the drug war, included detailed empirical analyses of contemporary patterns of police corruption, yet operated on the assumption that the United States served as a useful model to follow of a country that effectively resolved its police problem. The recent history of mass protests against police violence in the U.S. suggest that the police problem in the U.S. in fact remains an open question. Less policy-oriented observers, such as Markus-Michael Müller, have examined in more detail the widespread normalization of police abuses and the effective “privatization” of police power through corruption and clientelism, although his calls for moving away from securitization as a guiding principle for reform seem likely to fall on deaf ears. Sabet, *Police Reform in Mexico*; Markus-Michael Müller, *The Punitive City: Privatized Policing and Protection in Neoliberal Mexico* (London: Zed Books, 2016).

gendarmes who were either stationed on specific corners or assigned patrol routes. Urban expansion stretched interpersonal ties between the police and those they policed, but did not fully break them. While the police force itself became more closed and cohesive over time, individual gendarmes remained crucial points of contact and negotiation between public authorities and the population.

These institutional developments and continuities intersected with other changes. In the legal sphere, the criminal court system was never completely dominant as a means of ordering society and resolving disputes, but capitalinos often viewed it as a useful resource, albeit one they sought to employ selectively and often in idiosyncratic ways, such as viewing pre-trial arrest as sufficient punishment and thus dropping charges midway through the case before sentencing. The police played a key role in this process, and in practice police authority was extended through the city and into private spaces and relations through strategic alliances with residents themselves. However, the formal justice system became ever-more opaque, convoluted, and unpredictable over time. As a result, the police came to play an increasingly prominent role in resolving disputes and responding to crime through extralegal means, like the creation of informal *arreglos* (arrangements) between parties in dispute. The police had always engaged in such practices, but they became more appealing to city dwellers over time. However, while these extralegal practices allowed capitalinos a means of bringing some degree of public authority to bear (albeit through private logics of power) to attain a form of justice, they depended on, extended, and legitimated extralegal violence and its threat. They were also attractive to the police themselves: lacking legal controls, conditions were ripe for extortion and the extralegal expansion of police authority.

Something similar occurred with regulations on public spaces and behaviors. Police had always enforced such regulations selectively and with a great deal of individual discretion based on a range of interpersonal relations between police and policed, including the trading of favors and the paying of bribes. Such practices were vital for mitigating the law's restrictions on lower-class livelihoods and sociabilities. However, the growing cohesion of the police force, and its hierarchical organization, fostered the deepening of corruption as well as its increasing shift to financial extortion as the terms of trade for protection.

What role, then, did the police play in the ordering of Mexico City? It is tempting to argue that, far from ordering the city, they were more often a force for disorder. Yet this would miss that the making of order in Mexico City never came to depend on the equal enforcement of the law, but rather on its selective application as mediated by the personalization of ostensibly public authority. These practices were important for many capitalinos, allowing for a certain measure of justice, and proving crucial to their access to the city by mitigating legal restrictions. But these were also messy processes, backed by regular police violence and its constant threat, and they generated their own arenas of contestation. Embedded in local contexts, the police never quite lost their ties with the people they policed, yet while these ties could allow acts of discretion, they also could foster interpersonal disputes that police's ready access to force ensured would not take place on an even playing field.

In making these arguments, this dissertation builds on scholars' prior work on policing and crime in Mexico. Historians of crime like Pablo Piccato have written extensively about cultural attitudes and common practices around crime, highlighting contested views on diverse transgressions and tracing the popular legitimation of extrajudicial executions in the

postrevolutionary years.²¹ Drawing on their insights, this dissertation poses a related but distinct set of questions, less about cultural perceptions of crime and how to respond to it than about the workings of police institutions and the relationship between police and populace as seen through quotidian practices on the ground. In doing so, it elaborates on the work of scholars who have studied policing in Mexico. In a series of essays, Diego Pulido Esteva has similarly traced the role of routinized corruption and abuses in the late 1800s through the 1920s, arguing that they became increasingly embedded in the police institution and constituted a crucial part of what he terms “the rules of disorder” through which rule was established without top-down control.²²

Diane E. Davis has taken a more top-down approach, analyzing how post-revolutionary politicians came to tolerate a wide range of police abuses as the price for the police’s political allegiance as a means of state formation.²³ Taking a different perspective, scholars like Rodrigo

²¹ Piccato, *City of Suspects*; Piccato, “A Historical Perspective on Crime”; Piccato, *A History of Infamy*; Speckman Guerra, *Crimen y castigo*; Speckman Guerra, *Del Tigre de Santa Julia*; Speckman Guerra, *Horrorosísimos crímenes y ejemplares castigos*; Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio*. On the popular legitimacy of extralegal violence, see also: Gema Kloppe-Santamaría, *In the Vortex of Violence: Lynching, Extralegal Justice, and the State in Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2020).

²² Pulido Esteva, “Profesional y discrecional”; Pulido Esteva, “Los negocios de la policía”; Pulido Esteva, “El caso Quintana”; Diego Pulido Esteva, “Gendarmes, inspectores y comisarios: historia del sistema policial en la Ciudad de México, 1870-1930,” *Ler Historia* 70 (2017): 37–58; Pulido Esteva, “Trabajo, clase y prácticas policiales en las comisarías de la ciudad de México, 1870-1920.” I eagerly await his forthcoming book on the topic. The term “rules of disorder” is borrowed from the work of Emilio Duhau and Angela Giglia on urban order in Mexico City. Emilio Duhau and Angela Giglia, *Las reglas del desorden: habitar la metrópoli* (México, D.F.: Siglo XXI Editores, 2008). He has also published extensively on other aspects of policing, including on institutional development and police culture. See, for instance: Pulido Esteva, “Policía”; Diego Pulido Esteva, “Los gendarmes: perfil social de la policía capitalina, 1900-1930,” in *Orden, policía y seguridad: historia de las ciudades*, ed. Marcela Dávalos, Regina Hernández Franyuti, and Diego Pulido Esteva (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2017), 179–202; Diego Pulido Esteva, “El Día de Policía en México: una celebración para olvidar,” *Meridional: Revista Chilena de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, no. 14 (September 2020): 47–70.

²³ Davis, “Historia de detectives”; Diane E. Davis, “Policing, Regime Change and Democracy: Reflections from the Case of Mexico,” Crisis States Research Centre Working Paper (London: Crisis States Research Centre, November 2007); Diane E. Davis, “Policing and Populism in the Cárdenas and Echeverría Administrations,” in *Populism in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, ed. Amelia M. Kiddle and María L.O. Muñoz (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010), 135–58; Diane E. Davis, “Policing and Regime Transition: From Postauthoritarianism to Populism to Neoliberalism,” in *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*, ed. Wil G. Pansters (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 68–90.

Meneses Reyes, Mario Barbosa Cruz, Fabiola Bailón Vásquez, and others have drawn attention to the negotiated application of laws around the ordering of urban public space, while still other scholars have traced the role of police corruption in the long history of the drug trade, in particular, emphasizing longstanding complicity and conflicts over control of protection rackets.²⁴ Building on such work, this dissertation seeks to examine patterns of contestation and negotiation around policing in multiple fields and through various means, while tracing how they developed over time and examining their relationship to changes in police institutions. In doing so, it uses the study of policing to get at broader questions of urban governance and citizenship.

The history of policing in Mexico City cannot be told as simply a tale of institutional development, although institutional changes must be attended to. Too close an emphasis on the police force itself risks tunnel vision, but looking too broadly at the massive range of interactions between the police and the wider population risks losing coherence. This project attempts to strike a middle ground. As an institution (or several), the police changed over time, and an understanding of those changes is necessary to understand wider relations between the police and the public. But the focus of this dissertation remains the shifting patterns of strategic alliances, sharp conflicts, quotidian coercion, and ambiguous consent that defined the relationship between

²⁴ Rodrigo Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas: el derecho, el ambulante y las calles en el centro de la Ciudad de México (1930-2010)* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas; Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, 2011); Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*; Fabiola Bailón Vásquez, *Mujeres en el servicio doméstico y en la prostitución: sobrevivencia, control y vida cotidiana en la Oaxaca porfiriana*, Primera edición. (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2014); Diego Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud! Sociabilidades, libaciones y prácticas populares en la ciudad de México a principios del siglo XX* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2014); Benjamin T. Smith, *The Dope: The Real History of the Mexican Drug Trade* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2021); Carlos A. Pérez Ricart and Nidia A. Olvera Hernández, “Ascenso y declive de la Policía de Narcóticos del Departamento de Salubridad Pública en México (1917-1960),” *Historia Mexicana* 70, no. 4 (280) (June 2021): 1661–1713; Ricardo Pérez Montfort, *Tolerancia y prohibición: aproximaciones a la historia social y cultural de las drogas en México 1840-1940* (México: Debate (Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial), 2016), 185, 229–58; Luis Astorga, “Traficantes de drogas, políticos y policías en el siglo XX mexicano,” in *Vicios públicos, virtudes privadas: la corrupción en México*, ed. Claudio Lomnitz (México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2000), 167–93.

the police and the broader population; institutional changes are discussed with an eye to understanding how they shaped these patterns. This project therefore examines this relationship between police and the public through multiple angles, including popular efforts to use police power (either through legal or extralegal means) as a resource, conflicts over police violence, bribery and protection rackets, and discourse in the public sphere, keeping in view how institutional changes shaped these processes.

Readers knowledgeable about other sites in Latin America will likely find much of the above broadly familiar, and may reasonably ask in what ways Mexico City was unique. After all, scholars have found cities like Rio de Janeiro to have been similarly marked by an informal accord over the boundaries of public authority, with violations of expected norms strenuously contested.²⁵ Perhaps the main difference between Mexico City and other Latin American cities, in this respect, lay in the Mexican capital's institutional incoherence. Scholars have long noted that the state, everywhere, cannot be understood as a monolith, and places like Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires were (and are) certainly marked by jurisdictional frictions in the ordering of the city.²⁶ Yet Mexico City was the site of a particularly acute jumbling of institutions. This situation was not simply a product of the state's early, fumbling attempts at ordering the city, but was reinforced and deepened at every step. As Chapters Two and Five discuss, the police themselves were increasingly subdivided into separate institutions with often vague or overlapping functions, especially after the Revolution, and as shown in Chapter Four, the policing of public order was shared with a range of other institutions (including municipal tax

²⁵ José Murilo de Carvalho, *Os bestializados: o Rio de Janeiro e a República que não foi* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987).

²⁶ Amy Chazkel, for example, has noted tensions between the police and the judiciary over the *jogo do bicho*. Chazkel, *Laws of Chance*, 70–96. Osvaldo Barreneche has discussed tensions between local and provincial police in Buenos Aires province. Barreneche, *De brava a dura*, 27–30.

collectors and sanitary inspectors). As the above chapters suggest, this seeming institutional incoherence simultaneously caused frictions and was a key element in the negotiability of rule.

This emphasis on keeping an eye on formal institutions and extralegal practices alike draws on scholarly work on Latin American urban informality—a field which has only relatively recently come to be understood as having a history.²⁷ A capacious, ill-defined category, the “informal” has classically been taken as referring to spaces—notably the self-constructed, under-serviced neighborhoods of the urban poor that are so prominent in Latin American cities—and economies—the “informal sector” as a vast field of economic activity theoretically untouched by the state, untaxed and also lacking the benefits of the formal economy.²⁸ Studies of informality have often adopted what Ananya Roy has termed “subaltern urbanism,” seeing informal cities as sites for the creation of new forms of urban culture, social relations, and political formations.²⁹ Yet, as historians like Brodwyn Fischer have argued, informality is best understood as a legal relationship, entailing differentiated access to legal protections and the production of vulnerability through legal restrictions.³⁰ These vulnerabilities often function as a tool for

²⁷ Brodwyn Fischer, “A Century in the Present Tense: Crisis, Politics, and the Intellectual History of Brazil’s Informal Cities,” in *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America*, ed. Brodwyn Fischer, Bryan McCann, and Javier Auyero (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 9–67.

²⁸ These fields were at the center of earlier debates on urban marginality, more critical examples of which emphasized that the “marginal” was hardly at the margins, but rather was thoroughly intertwined with the modern or formal city. See, for instance: Susan Eckstein, *The Poverty of Revolution: The State and the Urban Poor in Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Janice E. Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976).

²⁹ Ananya Roy, “Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 2 (March 2011): 226. For two early, influential examples of what might be seen as optimistic portrayals, albeit from markedly different perspectives—while Castells celebrates the political possibilities of social movements generated by informality, de Soto views the informal sector as a hotbed of entrepreneurial capitalism waiting to be unleashed—see: Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), (esp. Part IV); Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989). For one example of a more recent portrayal of subaltern urbanism, see: Felipe Hernández, Peter Kellett, and Lea K. Allen, eds., *Rethinking the Informal City: Critical Perspectives from Latin America* (New York: Berghahn, 2012).

³⁰ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, esp. 4-6; Brodwyn Fischer, “Historicising Informal Governance in 20th Century Brazil,” *Contemporary Social Science*, May 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2021.1919748>.

governance, pushing residents of the informal city into close relations with political actors who can prevent full enforcement of repressive laws, enabling the continuation of conditions that expose residents to regularized violence and incomplete access to citizenship rights.³¹

Within Mexican history, urban informality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has typically been analyzed from the perspective of social historians examining specific groups of city dwellers.³² In Mexican cities of the era, numerous groups that faced degrees of scrutiny and restriction from public authorities, including impoverished street vendors, pulquería owners on the lower bounds of respectability, and prostitutes and brothel madams, all managed to carve out spaces in the city through negotiations with a range of city officials and the strategic use of state institutions.³³ Yet if historians agree that the expansion of urban public authority was a negotiated process, much remains to be clarified about the terms of that negotiation, how they changed over time, and the role of specific institutions. As the agents of the state most likely to come into contact with the wider population, the police of Mexico City stand as a particularly useful case study of this negotiation. This is especially so given their role in promoting informal

³¹ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*; Fischer, “Historicizing Informal Governance”; Brodwyn Fischer, Bryan McCann, and Javier Auyero, *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). See also: Chazkel, *Laws of Chance*, 15.

³² In setting this time frame, I am purposely excluding the literature on informal housing and *colonias proletarias*, which tends to focus more on the 1940s-1960s. On informal housing in Mexico City, and its many connections with the state, see: Emilio de Antuñano, “Planning a ‘Mass City’: The Politics of Planning in Mexico City, 1930-1960” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago, 2017).

³³ Bailón Vásquez, *Mujeres en el servicio doméstico y en la prostitución*, chap. 5; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, chaps. 4–5; Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas*; Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, chap. 3; Christina M. Jiménez, *Making an Urban Public: Popular Claims to the City in Mexico, 1879-1932* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019); Ingrid Bleynat, *Vendor’s Capitalism: A Political Economy of Public Markets in Mexico City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021); Bliss, *Compromised Positions*.

Such negotiations are hardly limited to Mexico, and hardly limited to the past. For an immersive examination of market and ambulatory vendors in (post?-)neoliberal Bolivia, with an emphasis on their complicated relations with an array of state agencies, see: Daniel M. Goldstein, *Owners of the Sidewalk: Security and Survival in the Informal City* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016).

processes for resolving disputes, which relied on and reinforced quotidian police violence for residents who found the formal legal system ineffective or unreachable.

As suggested by the above discussion of informality, the study of policing and urban order-making sheds light on questions of state formation in Mexico. Scholars have long questioned the relationship between state and society, especially in wake of the Revolution. After a wave of cultural turn-inspired studies that posited the state as, essentially, a discursive artifact to be negotiated, appropriated, and challenged by popular forces in the construction of hegemony, more recent scholarship has sought to give more weight to the state in the material realm.³⁴ While highlighting the role of coercion, recent works have moved away from portrayals of the state of a repressive leviathan, emphasizing instead its profound limitations.³⁵ Materially weak on the ground—tax collection remained a constant challenge—the postrevolutionary state

³⁴ There is a vast literature on postrevolutionary state formation. The turns discussed above flow out of earlier debates. From the 1970s onward, revisionists challenged previous interpretations that accepted the PRI as the representative of the victorious popular revolution, arguing that the revolution largely meant the defeat of popular movements and their subordination to a capitalist state. In contrast, neopopulists emphasized the high degree of popular participation in the revolution, and popular movements' ability to force some degree of recognition and material gains from the postrevolutionary state. To mention only a few representative works; early works include: Frank Tannenbaum, *Peace by Revolution: Mexico Since 1910*, Second Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966). Revisionists: Arnaldo Córdova, *La ideología de la revolución mexicana: la formación del nuevo régimen* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1973); Arnaldo Córdova, *La política de masas del cardenismo* (Ediciones Era, 1974); Adolfo Gilly, *La revolución interrumpida: México, 1910-1920: una guerra campesina por la tierra y el poder* (Mexico City: Ediciones El Caballito, 1971); John Womack, Jr., "The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920," in *Mexico Since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 125–200. Neopopulists (and more recent neopopulist-indebted works): Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987); John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, *Historia del desasosiego: la revolución en la Ciudad de México, 1911-1922* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2010). Cultural hegemony: Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994); Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997). The recent turn: Gillingham and Smith, *Dictablanda*; Wil G. Pansters, ed., *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

³⁵ The idea of the leviathan state was a common one among the revisionist school discussed in the previous footnote, emphasizing as it did the state's capacity to surveil and suppress political opposition.

was forced to recognize local political power brokers and to tolerate a high degree of autonomy from varied institutions and actors, generating a measure of governability or stability through negotiation, coercion, and the strategic provision of benefits.³⁶ Corruption and the formation of extralegal power arrangements, often generative of violence, were less failures of the state than constitutive of postrevolutionary order-making and state-making.³⁷ These dynamics played out not only in the countryside, but also in the cities. For postrevolutionary governments, maintaining order in Mexico City, in particular, was a necessity—and a challenge. The capital expanded faster than pressed administrators could practically keep up, and its population was a potential source of political opposition.³⁸

Within this context, the police of Mexico City were a crucial actor. As Diane E. Davis has argued, political tolerance for police autonomy and corruption posed a challenge to authorities, but was seen as a necessary trade-off for the police's continued allegiance to the regime; moreover, the creation of new police institutions helped to balance the political demands

³⁶ Benjamin T. Smith, "Building a State on the Cheap: Taxation, Social Movements, and Politics," in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968.*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 255–75; Benjamin T. Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Benjamin T. Smith, *The Mexican Press and Civil Society, 1940-1970: Stories from the Newsroom, Stories from the Street* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Michael J. Lettieri, "Wheels of Government: The Alianza de Camioneros and the Political Culture of P.R.I. Rule, 1929-1981" (Ph.D. Dissertation, History, San Diego, University of California, San Diego, 2014); Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Gladys McCormick, *The Logic of Compromise in Mexico: How the Countryside Was Key to the Emergence of Authoritarianism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Paul Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico: The Birth of a Strange Dictatorship* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Thomas Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Ben Fallaw and Terry Rugeley, *Forced Marches: Soldiers and Military Caciques in Modern Mexico* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012).

³⁷ For two informative studies of corruption in different realms—one in the regulation of street vending, the other in the immigration service, see: Ingrid Bleynat, "The Business of Governing: Corruption and Informal Politics in Mexico City's Markets, 1946-1958," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 50, no. 2 (May 2018): 355–81; Pablo Yankelevich, *Los otros: raza, normas y corrupción en la gestión de la extranjería en México, 1900-1950* (México: Bonilla Artigas Editores; El Colegio de México; Iberoamericana, 2019).

³⁸ The main work on the politics of Mexico City's postrevolutionary growth remains Diane E. Davis, *Urban Leviathan: Mexico City in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

of different bureaucratic actors.³⁹ However, as this dissertation shows, policing cannot be understood solely from an institutional standpoint. The police were among the most common points of contact between the state and the urban population, and their relationships with city residents must be taken as a key arenas of state formation. Capitalinos' efforts to make use of the police in their disputes, to expand police service to new neighborhoods, and at times to challenge the police, shed light on the day-to-day meaning of the state in the urban milieu.

Relatedly, policing stands out as a particularly propitious site to examine the quotidian meaning of citizenship and rights in Mexico. Policing and the upholding of public order implicates citizenship in several ways. It is not only a question of constitutional protections—which the police have frequently violated as a matter of course—although these are perhaps the most obvious connection. Paula López Caballero and Ariadna Acevedo Rodrigo have argued for understanding citizenship expansively, as the negotiation of criteria to be able to claim rights or simply exist in public space.⁴⁰ As the institution most broadly tasked with regulating urban public space, and endowed with wide authority over the use of violence, the police clearly shape citizenship in terms of citizens' abilities to claim access to the city and their exposure to violence. At the same time, the ability of citizens to themselves shape the working of the police and claim access to them as a public service must itself be considered an aspect of citizenship.⁴¹

³⁹ Davis, "Historia de detectives"; Davis, "Policing, Regime Change and Democracy"; Davis, "Policing and Populism"; Davis, "Policing and Regime Transition."

⁴⁰ Paula López Caballero and Ariadna Acevedo Rodrigo, "Introducción: los ciudadanos inesperados," in *Ciudadanos inesperados: Espacios de formación de la ciudadanía ayer y hoy*, ed. Ariadna Acevedo Rodrigo and Paula López Caballero (México: El Colegio de México; Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados del Instituto Politécnico Nacional, 2012), 26 and passim. Their essay provides a useful introduction, as well, into different ways that citizenship has been considered. For a suggestive discussion of ideas of citizenship in Latin America, with a focus on Mexico, over what he terms a "century of citizenship" over 1850-1950, see: Paul Gillingham, "Thoughts on Citizenship in Latin America, with Particular Reference to Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 36, no. 1–2 (Winter/Summer 2020): 10–42.

⁴¹ In his history of relations between police and the Black population in Chicago, Simon Balto argues for interpreting Black Chicagoans' longstanding efforts to promote police reform through the lens of the right to the

Viewed in these terms, the entrenched negotiation of policing emerges in multiple registers. Negotiation allowed capitalinos to claim access to public spaces and police resources, yet came at the cost of propping up structures of police violence that contributed to the weakening of citizenship rights.

Sources and Outline

Police work encompasses so many varied tasks, each with their own historical dynamics, and this project encompasses a lengthy enough time span, that it was necessary to make several decisions to limit the project's scope through several exclusions. First, the following dissertation touches only little, and largely indirectly, on expressly political policing: the surveillance of dissidents, the breakup of protests, and the repression of opposition movements. Such policing, which has been the subject of several recent studies, operated according to its own logics rather removed from those of day-to-day urban order.⁴² This is not meant to imply that the policing discussed in this project was not, in a wider sense, political—far from it—but reflects that it had relatively little direct connection to the world of organized politics. Second, in contrast to studies that have emphasized crime—especially spectacular murders that attracted extensive press attention—in order to shed light on ideas of justice, the public sphere, and the legal process, this work focuses on the more mundane making and enforcing of public order in the city, seeking to

city. As fruitfully as Balto uses the concept in his own work, it should be noted that not all efforts by citizens to shape policing should necessarily be considered through the Lefebvrian lens—efforts to merely claim greater access to police as a resource do not match the radicalism at the heart of the Lefebvrian right to the city. Simon Balto, *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 9.

⁴² See, for instance: Sergio Aguayo Quezada, *La charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México* (México: Editorial Grijalbo, 2001); Aaron W. Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); César Enrique Váldez Chávez, *Enemigos fueron todos: vigilancia y persecución política en México posrevolucionario (1924-1946)* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia; Bonilla Artigas Editores, 2021).

examine quotidian police practices and relations that were formed, reproduced, and shaped on a day-to-day basis.⁴³

One important further limitation of this study must be mentioned. The sources consulted were not propitious for the study of race and policing. This is not to suggest that race did not matter in Mexico—it certainly did—or that the country was somehow color blind—it most definitely was not.⁴⁴ During the period under study, criminologists regularly emphasized race and racial atavisms in mestizo and indigenous peoples as causes of crime, and other sources suggest that the association of indigeneity and criminality extended beyond the world of criminology.⁴⁵ Unsurprisingly, the police were a part of efforts at racialized social control. In late 1912, for instance, after the governor decreed that all men appearing in public in the city were required to wear modern trousers—a project drawing on Porfirian antecedents that was explicitly aimed at forcing indigenous men to cease wearing traditional clothing—a follow-up circular informed the public that they could comply by purchasing acceptable, subsidized clothing for fifty centavos in any police office.⁴⁶ But in general, the court and police records used for this

⁴³ See, for example: Piccato, *A History of Infamy*; Speckman Guerra, *Del Tigre de Santa Julia*; Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio*; Martha Santillán Esqueda, *Delincuencia femenina: Ciudad de México, 1940-1954* (México: Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Penales, 2017).

⁴⁴ There is a vast literature on race in Mexico. One starting point for recent work, at least on indigeneity, would be the essays collected in Paula López Caballero, Ariadna Acevedo Rodrigo, and Paul K. Eiss, eds., *Beyond Alterity: Destabilizing the Indigenous Other in Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018). Of course, “indigenous” is not the only racial category in Mexico: see works on Afro-Mexicans and Chinese immigrants, for example: Theodore W. Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation After the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Julia María Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

⁴⁵ Urías Horcasitas, *Indígena y criminal*; Beatriz Urías Horcasitas, *Historias secretas del racismo en México (1920-1950)* (Mexico City: Tusquets Editores México, 2007); Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico*. In the wider world, Mauricio Tenorio has noted that racism was a common feature of early collections of popular sayings. Sayings like *Indio con puro ladrón seguro* (“an Indian with a cigar is surely a thief”) linked race to crime. Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 359.

⁴⁶ AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Bandos, Leyes y Decretos 1825-1925: Caja 78, Exp. 24: Circular of 13 September 1912, and *Ibid.*: Caja 78, Exp. 26, Circular of 1 October 1912. On Porfirian antecedents: Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 41–42; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, 17–18.

project contain little to no information about race. Racial data on suspects, witnesses, and victims was mostly not systematically collected in criminal justice institutions. For example, around the time that the 1921 Census (the only one in the research period to include race as a category) counted 18.75% of the Federal District's population as indigenous, police station logbooks included a race column, yet clerks invariably either left it blank or categorized everyone as "mestizo," perhaps reflecting the postrevolutionary nationalist valorization of mestizaje but hardly shedding light on questions about racialized vulnerability to policing.⁴⁷ In short, while the sources used here at times hint at questions of race, they are insufficient to the task; the cultural and social history of race in the twentieth-century city remains to be written.

This project draws on several types of sources. First, several hundred criminal court records from the Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Distrito Federal (TSJDF, e.g., the Federal District court system) in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) were used to shed light on police practices and capitalinos' relations with the police. Given the extensive time frame of this project, it draws on a sample of several six-year periods. 1878-1883 sheds light on the early Porfiriato and the stabilization of police organization after the 1879 reforms, while 1900-1905 allows for a look at the late Porfiriato. 1913-1918 covers the Revolution from the Decena Trágica to the stabilization of Carrancista control. 1920-1925 covers key years of police reform in the post-revolutionary era, while 1933-1938 traces the transition from the Maximato through the first several years of Cardenismo. Finally, at the time of research, the TSJDF collections ended in 1947; the final sample therefore covers 1942-1947 to examine the midcentury city. Multiple strategies were employed due to archival limitations. Pre-1900 court files were not

⁴⁷ The logbooks, fifty-three in number from 1923 and 1925, are filed in: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Registros de Entradas.

catalogued in detail and were filed in boxes by year alongside civil court records, so the sample gathered from 1878-1883 is a more-or-less random assortment of types of offenses culled from sifting through a large number of boxes.⁴⁸ In contrast, post-1900 court files were well-catalogued, allowing cases to be selected. The bulk of the court record sample post-1900 focuses on cases of abuse of authority by police, and various offenses against police. Although such cases made up a relatively small percent of overall cases, they are particularly useful for examining relations between the police and the populace. Moreover, as many such cases were filed as a result of police intervention in regulatory or public order offenses that were usually handled administratively without going to the courts, these cases allow for a more granular and polysemic look at such incidents, which were not as thoroughly described, debated, and investigated in other sources on them such as administrative records. At the same time, these cases were supplemented by a wider range of cases on other types of crimes, especially assault (*lesiones* or *heridas*), which was the most common type of offense for the bulk of the period under study.

Court records are appealing sources for historians, yet they can be tricky to use. The judicial process produces its own narrative, and it can at times be difficult to read past the specific questions of the case—focused on proving or disproving guilt—to examine the deeper questions that motivate historians.⁴⁹ Despite being regularly celebrated as among the few historical sources containing the voices of those who rarely appeared in other documents, their voices do not appear unmediated. Court records were produced in conjunction with judicial and

⁴⁸ The 1878-1883 sample is not entirely random, as at times it was decided to pass over certain types of cases that had already been gathered in significant numbers and/or were determined to be of little use for this project due to featuring limited police involvement.

⁴⁹ Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *Caetana Says No: Women's Stories from A Brazilian Slave Society* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

police personnel, who certainly brought their own biases to the table, while those giving statements often tried to play into narratives meant to appeal to their interlocutors, highlighting their respectability and worthiness through whatever resources they had available—including occupation, familial status, ties to a patron, or other means. They are polyphonic documents containing many, often contradictory, statements, sometimes by the same individual. It is extremely difficult to determine the truth of any particular utterance. But through the layering of testimony, comparisons across cases, and contextualization with other sources, it is possible to paint a general picture of social patterns, and to gain some understanding, however partial, of individual incidents. Moreover, seemingly isolated or unique cases can still shed light on broader dynamics, as long as care is taken to ask why such cases were so rare.⁵⁰

The project also draws on a range of other sources. Laws, legislation, and ordinances, especially police regulations and public order decrees, provide an important base for the institutional framework of policing, although they must be understood in light of the often-selective ways they were employed rather than taken as fully indicative in themselves of enforcement. Petitions and letters from capitalinos to city officials must be read carefully, and often include relatively little information about those who wrote them; nonetheless, they shed light on efforts to shape the use of public authority, as well as perceptions of abuses. Newspapers and printed sources (such as criminology and juridical tracts) highlight wider debates, whether carried out in the public eye or between experts, about policing. Finally, a range of

⁵⁰ On reading court records, see: Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 6–8; Graham, *Caetana Says No*, 3; Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 160, 166–69.

administrative records from federal, city, and municipal governments provide insight into the inner workings of the police, albeit with numerous gaps.⁵¹

Rather than strict chronology, the following dissertation is organized more thematically, but with the central period of focus of most chapters gradually progressing forward in time. Chapter One traces the origins of what might be considered the “modern”—that is, professional, salaried, and centralized—police institution in Mexico City. Although such police are often framed as an innovation of the early Porfiriato, Chapter One complicates this notion to highlight the contested role of citizenship in nineteenth century policing. As it shows, public order after independence was the province of a vast number of ever-changing institutions. Debates centered on whether policing should be carried out by a centralized, professionalized, and/or militarized force, or by unpaid city residents, with multiple types of institutions often coexisting. At stake was the question of what role citizens were to play in the daily maintenance of order, as participation in residential policing served as a key arena of citizenship. Yet residential policing proved problematic for authorities and capitalinos both. Participation was inconsistent, authorities fretted that granting citizens police power could generate tensions in neighborhoods, and for all that citizens’ participation was framed as a means of preventing abuses, residential policing was hardly free of such problems. By the 1850s, city and federal authorities increasingly

⁵¹ The bulk of administrative records on policing are in the Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de México (AHCM). However, its holdings are incomplete; the police are best-documented for the periods around 1915-1916 and the early 1920s, with relatively sparse filings for other years (notably, many of the records in the AHCM’s police collection from prior to 1910 deal more with the often-poor physical condition of police buildings than with police practices per se). Although the AHCM does include important collections from the post-revolutionary era, I was unable to make extensive use of them. The September 2017 earthquake damaged the archive and prevented access to its holdings from the Departamento del Distrito Federal (DDF), the city government from 1929 onward. The AGN contains important documents on post-revolutionary policing in its presidential files, but such files are sporadic and inconsistent. The AGN also holds files on policing from the DGIPS (Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales), the government’s internal surveillance organization. These files are also highly variable and inconsistent from year to year—many are simply newspaper clippings, although some detail investigations into the police force.

came to favor professional police, although residential authorities continued to play a limited role until late in the nineteenth century. The Gendarmería Municipal of 1879—the professional police corps that would endure well into the twentieth century—was simply the latest, longest-lasting expression of a longer process by which the exercise of police power was slowly but systematically decoupled from the exercise of citizenship.

If the shift to professional policing was framed as a means of improving security and preventing abuses, it can hardly be said to have been a success in its own terms. Chapter Two examines recurrent police reform efforts from 1879 to the mid-twentieth century, based largely on print sources and regulations. Police reform can be broadly divided into two eras: the Porfiriato and the Post-Revolutionary era. During the Porfiriato, the Gendarmería changed little, besides growing in size in an ultimately failed bid to keep up with urban growth. Nonetheless, severe criticisms of the police—as incompetent, corrupt, and abusive—were regularly aired in the press, and debates between the government’s supporters and its critics over police reform were a common occurrence. In response, officials embarked on a major reform plan intended to create a Código de Policía in the 1890s, although the project stalled as it faced the difficulty of reforming entrenched practices through law. In contrast, the post-revolutionary years witnessed major reforms. The police were increasingly divided into separate institutions—most notably, the Preventive Police and the Judicial Police—ostensibly to curb abuses and promote professionalization, while police education was improved. However, despite such changes, criticism of the police remained practically unchanged from the Porfiriato: the press and experts alike routinely commented on scandals and abuses. In fact, one of the main effects of growing professionalization was increasing cohesion among the police around the use of violence. If Porfirian gendarmes had been surprisingly willing to testify against each other, by the

postrevolutionary years the police presented a more unified front (with most disputes now located between separate police institutions). Despite criticisms, practically all observers agreed that the police were crucial for the maintenance of urban order, even if their importance relative to other institutions declined gradually in the 1930s and 1940s. Ultimately, discourse around police reform—the continual promise that changes just around the corner would end abuses and finally turn the police into an effective force—served as a means of propping up the ever-faltering legitimacy of the institution, and through it, the government.

Chapter Three shifts away from a narrow focus on police institutions to instead examine relations between the broader urban population and the police, seeking to understand how capitalinos sought to use the police and shape their realm of authority in a constant negotiation of power. It argues against framing police-public interactions through the lens of domination and resistance. Instead, police became regularly implicated in social relations at the profoundly local level (whether that meant the neighborhood, the *vecindad*, or the family), and residents regularly sought to make use of the police as resources to resolve or respond to disputes. However, given the inherent violence of policing, and tensions between capitalinos' own varied visions of justice and public authorities' (also varied) visions of the same, the relationship between the police and the public was a fraught one, and city residents also regularly sought to limit perceived abuses through a repertoire of quotidian practices. The chapter further traces the role of corruption, discretion, and extralegal uses of police power. As it argues, these elements were always present in police-public relations, serving multiple purposes from the tolerance of popular sociabilities, to the financial gain of the police, to the generation of extralegal forms of justice through the fostering of informal *arreglos* (“arrangements”) backed by violence and its threat as a means of resolving disputes. However, a series of developments from the 1920s onward, including the

decreasing accessibility of the formal justice system, increasingly brought these aspects of policing to the fore.

Chapter Four further analyzes the question of corruption and extralegality by zooming in on a particular social group. It examines the history of relations between police and the city's vendors, emphasizing the 1930s as an inflection point in a significant reshaping of their relationship. A profoundly variegated group, vendors—and especially street vendors—had an exceptionally high degree of contact with the police, especially as a series of regulations sought to control commerce (especially alcohol sales) in the name of public order and hygiene. Vendors had long depended on police protection from enforcement, and regularly formed working relationships (or, at times, rivalries) with them based on a range of transactions, from the giving of favors to the payment of bribes. However, several broader developments—including the Great Depression, shifts in alcohol sales, and changes in the police force—coincided to shift vendor-police relations to a new equilibrium. Protection increasingly came to depend on the payment of cash and insertion into wider networks of corruption, and police increasingly came to rely on violence to enforce this shift, provoking vendors to turn to the courts for redress. However, police remained crucial intermediaries between the world of regulations and the world of the street, and vendors could hardly do without their protections despite the cost. Overall, the chapter highlights the role of the police in shaping vendors' rights to access to the city and its markets: if vendors succeeded in carving out spaces for their own survival, it was at the cost of high vulnerability to police violence.

Finally, Chapter Five turns to the ostensibly “private” (though more accurately semi-private) police of the capital. Beginning during the chaos of the Revolution, and continuing into the period of municipal autonomy in the 1920s, authorities across the Federal District promoted

the creation of “private” police forces. Despite their name, these organizations were diverse, encompassing everything from residential patrols, to the direct funding by citizens of parallel police forces tasked with guarding specific neighborhoods, to simple security guards. During the 1930s, these various groups were gradually brought under government control through the *Policía Auxiliar* corps and given a greater share of authority over public order in a wide range of urban spaces, from outlying colonias, to street parking downtown. Yet their protection was ostensibly privatized, available only through payment by clients. Although their presence provoked controversy, they nonetheless provided authorities with a cheap way of providing the increasingly far-flung city with security. At the same time, the *Policía Auxiliar* was thoroughly implicated in networks of corruption. Ultimately, rather than standing in stark contrast to public policing, the “private” police of the *Policía Auxiliar* encapsulated many of the same tendencies. Furthermore, their relationship with the state highlights how authorities found the gray area between public and private a useful tool for establishing governance in response to the challenges of rapid urbanization in the context of limited resources.

Before getting to the chapters themselves, however, context is necessary. The remainder of the introduction therefore traces the social history of Mexico City, and the wider Federal District. The processes of urban growth, the structures of class and gender, the worlds of work, and the spaces of the city that it discusses will be referred back to throughout the rest of the dissertation.

Mexico City, c.1870-1950

By the 1870s, Mexico City appeared relatively little changed in physical appearance and organization from the old viceregal capital. The economy largely stagnated in the long recession

after independence, as did population growth, with the city's population hovering between 160,000 and 200,000 according to diverse estimates.⁵² Although the city had been reshaped by the Reform-era expropriation of Church properties and the resulting real estate boom, the capital's layout remained much as it had in previous centuries.⁵³ Surrounded by national and local government buildings and the ornate metropolitan cathedral, the central Plaza Mayor (also called the *Zócalo*) continued to be the hub—a marketplace, a meeting place, a space for public spectacle—around which the city was organized. A rigid grid of streets emanated from the plaza, lined with multistory colonial-era buildings with imposing facades of red-brown volcanic *tezontle* stone that sheltered the elegant manors of the wealthy and the small apartments of the working classes alike. This orderly image of urbanity gradually gave way to winding narrow alleyways, crude shacks, farmers' fields, and swampy lowlands on the city's periphery. The city was ringed by various *barrios*, poorer neighborhoods that had been incorporated in the early colonial era as indigenous towns; the end of formal caste distinctions and the formation of the

⁵² On the post-independence economy, see: John H. Coatsworth, "Obstacles to Economic Growth in Nineteenth-Century Mexico," *The American Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (February 1978): 80–100; Enrique Cárdenas Sánchez, *El largo curso de la economía mexicana: de 1870 a nuestros días* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, El Colegio de México, 2015), 141–87.

Given the limitations of the available data, pinpointing the city's population is a difficult task. Higher figures, accepted by most scholars, are largely based on estimates and calculations made by contemporary officials, geographers, and foreign visitors, as well as a police *padrón* from 1811 that suggested the city, swollen with refugees fleeing the war in the countryside, had a population of nearly 170,000. In contrast, Sonia Pérez Toledo and Herbert S. Klein have proposed a much lower population of 120,000–130,000, based on *padrones* made by the city government from other years that they argue are more accurate than contemporary observers' estimates. However, while Pérez Toledo's and Klein's work is invaluable for approximating the capital's social structure, it must be noted that city officials at the time regularly complained that people evaded the *padrón*, and I have therefore chosen to follow the higher estimates. For population figures from the midcentury, see: Silvia Marina Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 10; Regina Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal: historia y vicisitudes de una invención, 1824-1994* (México: Instituto Mora, 2008), 83; Sonia Pérez Toledo and Herbert S. Klein, *Población y estructura social de la Ciudad de México, 1790-1842* (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa, 2004), 64–66. On the 1811 police *padrón*, see: Arrom, *Containing the Poor*, 305–306n25.

⁵³ María Dolores Morales, "La expansión de la ciudad de México en el Siglo XIX: el caso de los fraccionamientos," in *Investigaciones sobre la historia de la ciudad de México*, Cuadernos de trabajo del Departamento de Investigaciones Históricas, INAH (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1974), 76–77, 80–81; Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 20–21.

Federal District had led to the gradual decline of the barrios' traditional privileges and political autonomy after independence.⁵⁴ Only a handful of recently constructed *colonias* (neighborhoods), such as middle-class Santa María la Ribera and working-class Guerrero, and the newly-built broad avenue of the Paseo de la Reforma to the city's west pointed toward physical changes to come.⁵⁵

Further from the city itself, the Federal District encompassed a much broader stretch of territory on the southern edge of the Valley of Mexico: from the stagnant waters of Lake Texcoco to the east of the capital, to the rivers and canyons to the west, and from the hills of Tepeyac in the north, to the extensive forested mountains to the south on the border with Morelos. The terrain of the Federal District's hinterlands was dotted with small towns, ranches, and haciendas. Few of them in the nineteenth century had more than a couple thousand people. Although some towns (especially San Ángel) had nascent industrial workshops, a larger percentage of the population worked in agriculture, and many residents continued to speak indigenous languages, especially in and around Xochimilco to the south.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, these areas were tightly bound to the capital. Many of the vendors who filled Mexico City's markets

⁵⁴ Andrés Lira, *Comunidades indígenas frente a la ciudad de México: Tenochtitlán y Tlatelolco, sus pueblos y barrios, 1812-1919*, 2nd Edition (México: El Colegio de México, 1995).

⁵⁵ Jorge H. Jiménez Muñoz, *La traza del poder: historia de la política y los negocios urbanos en el Distrito Federal de sus orígenes a la desaparición del Ayuntamiento (1824-1928)*, Corrected and Augmented Edition, Originally Published 1993 (México, D.F.: Gobierno del Distrito Federal; Secretaría de Cultura del Gobierno del Distrito Federal; Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México, 2012), 19; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, 19; Dolores Morales, "La expansión de la ciudad de México en el Siglo XIX: el caso de los fraccionamientos," 76–77.

⁵⁶ According to the 1900 census (by which time indigenous language use had likely declined from the mid-nineteenth century), 6,388 of the Federal District's 8,527 Nahuatl speakers lived in the prefecture of Xochimilco, making up 12% of the municipality's population. 23% of Xochimilco's population worked as agricultural "peones del campo," as opposed to less than 2.5% of Mexico City's population. Secretaría de Fomento, Colonización é Industria, *Censo general de la República Mexicana verificado el 28 de octubre de 1900* (México: Oficina Tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1901).

The rivers southwest of Mexico City were used to power several major textile workshops in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in San Ángel and Tlalpan. On this, and population figures for 1848, see: Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 83, 98.

lived in the surrounding towns, ranches, and haciendas, traveling regularly by canal or road to sell food grown in the District's fields. Some towns, particularly those at higher elevations to the west and south like Tacubaya, were noted as the site of summer homes for the wealthy, some of whom also owned haciendas in the area.⁵⁷

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the capital began a process of substantial transformation and major growth due to developments at the national and local scale. Major economic changes impelled urbanization. Political elites promoted foreign investment in an effort to bolster the economy and promote development, and Mexico came to be increasingly connected to transnational flows of capital and commerce. As the national economy underwent sustained growth on a scale unheard of earlier in the century, internal migration increased dramatically. Railroad lines began to be constructed on a large scale in the 1880s and converged from across the country on the capital, allowing for substantially cheaper and easier migration to the city.⁵⁸ Although the consolidation of landholding in the countryside was profoundly uneven across the country, changes in land tenure and associated conflicts pushed many peasants off of village lands, and at least some of them found their way to the capital.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, growth in commerce, the emergence of nascent industrialization, and the availability of service jobs

⁵⁷ On vendors in the late colonial era, see: Haslip-Viera, *Crime and Punishment in Late Colonial Mexico City*, 10. On Tacubaya: Sergio Miranda Pacheco, *Tacubaya: de suburbio veraniego a ciudad*, Reprint of 1st Edition, Originally Published 2007 (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2014), 9, 76–79, 87. Ann Blum has noted that women in Tacuba and Tlalnepantla (the latter just over the border in Mexico State) held practical monopolies on providing wet nursing services and rearing children from the capital's Casa de Niños Expósitos. Ann S. Blum, *Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884-1943* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 75.

⁵⁸ On the impact of railroads, see: John H. Coatsworth, *Growth Against Development: The Economic Impact of Railroads in Porfirian Mexico* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981).

⁵⁹ Historians are increasingly coming to challenge traditional accounts of straightforward land privatization and concentration, arguing that it was a much more uneven and contested process than old narratives would have it. For a suggestive discussion, see: Emilio Kourí, "Sobre la propiedad comunal de los pueblos: de la reforma a la revolución," *Historia Mexicana* 66, no. 4 (264) (June 2017): 1923–60.

catering to the city's growing population all drew ever-greater numbers of migrants to the capital.⁶⁰ The population of Mexico City increased from around 200,000 in the mid-nineteenth century, to just under 370,000 by 1900, and to over 470,000 by 1910. Nearby municipalities also began to expand: the population of the entire Federal District reached 720,000 by 1910.⁶¹

Viewed from a distance, it would be simple to divide the growing city's population broadly into two groups—an upper- and middle-class *gente decente* and the lower-and-working-class *plebe*.⁶² However, despite the attractions of such a tidy scheme, especially for the *gente decente*'s own self-image, these categories severely distort how most capitalinos saw themselves and understood their own society. Writing in 1901, the eclectic criminologist Julio Guerrero divided the city into four broad groups and roughly eight subgroups organized by a mixture of education, occupation, family life, home quality, race, and “morality”. At the lowest level, he placed beggars and those who lived on the streets or in public flophouses, contrasting their perceived inherent disorderliness with the purported morality, structured families, and work ethic

⁶⁰ On Porfirian growth and its causes, see: Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 50–53; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 21–23; Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada: el Ayuntamiento de México: política y gobierno, 1876-1912* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Azcapotzalco; El Colegio de México, 1996), 82–86; Gustavo Garza, *El proceso de industrialización en la ciudad de México, 1821-1970* (México, D.F: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Demográficos y de Desarrollo Urbano, 1985), 97-132 (Ch. 5).

⁶¹ Unless otherwise noted, population figures are taken from the national censuses carried out in 1895, 1900, and 1910 (and later, in 1921, 1930, 1940, and 1950). Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo General de la República Mexicana. Verificado el 20 de octubre de 1895. Resumen General* (México: Oficina Tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1899); Secretaría de Fomento, Colonización é Industria, *Censo general de la República Mexicana verificado el 28 de octubre de 1900* (México: Oficina Tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1901); Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento, Dirección de Estadística, *Tercer Censo de Población de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos verificado el 27 de octubre de 1910* (México: Oficina Impresora de la Secretaría de Hacienda, Departamento de Fomento, 1918). Henceforth, while the first citation of each new census will be given in full, otherwise I will simply refer to them by their year, e.g. “the 1900 Census.”

It should be noted that, behind their seeming specificity and positivist accuracy, census figures provided at best a rough estimate, and censuses were crucial tools of state and national formation. On reading censuses, and the origins of modern censuses in Latin America, see: Mara Loveman, “Census Taking and Nation Making in Nineteenth-Century Latin America,” in *State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain: Republics of the Possible*, ed. Miguel A. Centeno and Agustín E. Ferraro (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 337.

⁶² See, for instance: Garza, *The Imagined Underworld*. It should be noted that Garza does complicate this scheme through an exploration of the complicated role of the middle classes.

of nonetheless impoverished indigenous peoples in the city's outskirts. Above both, Guerrero stated, was a rather amorphous class of unskilled or low-skilled workers, domestic servants, and soldiers, who had low pay and irregular families but displayed certain positive qualities, including the unskilled worker's industriousness and the soldier's discipline and patriotism. Higher still in Guerrero's estimation were artisans (although their status had been substantially eroded over the past century by the abolition of guilds, general economic stagnation, and nascent industrialization), clerks, low-level commercial employees, and the lower levels of the state bureaucracy (including the police). Along with the city's various small enclaves of foreign immigrants (referring to Spaniards, mostly), Guerrero saw them as united by possessing relatively stable families, a degree of education, attentiveness to the public sphere, and the moderation to avoid habitual drunkenness. Finally, Guerrero lumped together at the top the upper and professional classes.⁶³ Although Guerrero's prejudices were clear, his convoluted classification scheme nonetheless highlights that the city's social structure was permeated by internal hierarchies and a multitude of ways—including education, work, and marriage—by which many could claim some degree of respectability.

The median capitalino of the turn of the century would have been a literate, young, unmarried female migrant. Large-scale migration meant that, by 1900, only a third of the capital's residents had been born in the Federal District, with the bulk of the population coming from relatively populous states in central Mexico like Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Querétaro, or Mexico State (the latter the origin of nearly 28 percent of the city's residents). Migrants skewed

⁶³ Julio Guerrero, *La génesis del crimen en México: estudio de psiquiatría social* (Paris: Vda. de C. Bouret, 1901), 158–82. On the decline of artisans's position over the nineteenth century, see: Sonia Pérez Toledo, *Los hijos del trabajo: los artesanos de la ciudad de México, 1780-1853* (México: El Colegio de México, 1996); Carlos Illades, *Hacia la república del trabajo: la organización artesanal en la Ciudad de México, 1853-1876* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1996).

young, as well, with the 1900 census listing the largest age groups as those of people aged 16-20, 21-25, and 26-30. Unlike in other Latin America cities like Rio de Janeiro, where the population was predominantly male, women outnumbered men in the Mexican capital. Although men were more likely than women to be literate, a slight majority of adult women could also read and write, and in the city as a whole, around 56 percent of people aged 12 and above were literate by 1900, by far the highest literacy rate in the country. A majority of the adult population was listed in the census as single, although many lived in informal bonds of *amasiato* that were unrecognized by Church and State.⁶⁴

Given persistently low wages and the city's relatively high cost of living, practically everyone had to find work among poor living conditions. Emerging ideologies of respectable domesticity sought to limit women to the space of the home, but in practice, working people could not afford to follow such dictates.⁶⁵ The world of work was profoundly heterogenous. By the late Porfiriato, industrialization remained in its infancy: in the 1910 census, only four percent of the workforce was considered to be in industrial labor, including a not-insubstantial number of women working in the tobacco industry.⁶⁶ Most production took place in sweatshops, through piecework, and in artisan establishments, although the gradual increase in mechanization and the constant influx of low-skilled migrants contributed to the progressive deskilling of the labor

⁶⁴ All Mexico City data from the 1900 Census. According to John Lear, in 1910 the city's overall literacy rate was 51%. Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 53. On Rio's largely male population: Carvalho, *Os bestializados*, 17.

⁶⁵ Willam E. French, "Prostitutes and Guardian Angels: Women, Work, and the Family in Porfirian Mexico," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (November 1992): 529-53; Blum, *Domestic Economies*. It is difficult to fully track the world of women's work from court records. Women who gave testimony were usually not asked their occupation until the 1940s, at which point the majority claimed to devote themselves to housework (thus trying to bolster their credibility by claiming conformity with gender norms) even when their testimony made it clear that they worked in other occupations.

⁶⁶ Susie S. Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourses and Material Conditions, 1879-1931* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2003).

force.⁶⁷ Many men also labored in construction jobs that were in high demand with the city's relentless expansion. While certain occupations, such as shoemaking or carpentry, were largely dominated by men, clothing production employed over 18,000 women by the 1910 census's count. Service jobs were also common, especially for women. Domestic labor was one of the largest occupational categories, employing nearly 33,500 people (three-quarters of them women) according to the 1900 census, which likely was an undercount; numerous children also carried out domestic work, as well.⁶⁸ Thousands of people also found jobs as laundresses, drivers, and other such work. Many also worked in commerce, a capacious category that included everyone from large established shopkeepers, to market stall operators, to street vendors (with the percentage of women increasing at every step down on the scale).⁶⁹ For many city dwellers, occupational categories were hardly rigid, and many changed jobs according to need or mixed different types of work at the same time. Occupation also provided a means of claiming some measure of respectability, particularly for those who had developed some sort of skill, such as artisans or skilled machinists, or those who worked independently and could claim their own business, like stall operators.

This heterogenous world of work took place in a rapidly-changing urban space. The city grew dramatically in area: if the urban area covering 8.5 square kilometers in 1856, it covered 40.5 square kilometers in 1910. Although Lake Texcoco's stagnant waters limited expansion to

⁶⁷ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 65; Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 14–15.

⁶⁸ Blum, *Domestic Economies*.

⁶⁹ The 1900 Census counted around 25,000 *comerciantes* in Mexico City, around a fifth of them women. The 1910 Census listed some 41,864 *comerciantes*, although this category was rather wider than in 1900, not just including the entirety of the Federal District, but also likely including street vendors as well, who were separated in earlier censuses. In the 1900 Census, there were only 334 street vendors. In contrast, the 1895 Census had counted over 900, nearly 400 of whom were women. As Piccato notes, street vendors were likely undercounted in the censuses, especially that of 1900. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 31.

the east, developers surrounded the city with new colonias on all sides.⁷⁰ The expansion of streetcar lines linked the countryside and the city like never before. More distant towns, like Xochimilco, Milpa Alta, and Cuajimalpa, saw little change in the era, but towns like Tacubaya and Tacuba (to the west) and Guadalupe Hidalgo (to the north) became increasingly threaded together with the broader urban fabric, growing from tiny rural hamlets to bustling suburbs.⁷¹

The city itself changed substantially, as well. The Porfirian government pursued the modernization of the city not only as a means of advertising the regime's stability to foreign investors, but also as a means of legitimating the government and seeking to turn residents into productive modern citizens. Not only did the government spend heavily on spectacular architecture and public monuments, especially in the city center and along the elegant Paseo de la Reforma, but authorities also began to install drainage, sewer, and public water systems, build new markets, modernize streetlights and streetcars, and construct new parks and plazas.⁷² However, such improvements were profoundly unevenly distributed, and became visible markets of the capital's increasingly visible inequalities.

Compared with previous decades, the capital became increasingly, but never completely, divided by class. The city center became increasingly dedicated by commerce and finance, pushing out residents. The upper and middle classes slowly abandoned their traditional homes in

⁷⁰ María Dolores Morales's work on the city's physical expansion remains foundational. María Dolores Morales, "La expansión de la ciudad de México en el Siglo XIX: el caso de los fraccionamientos," in *Investigaciones sobre la historia de la ciudad de México*, Cuadernos de trabajo del Departamento de Investigaciones Históricas, INAH (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1974), esp. 74 on surface area, and 76-79 for a periodization of the city's physical growth.

⁷¹ Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada*, chap. 5.

⁷² Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, chap. 1; Matthew Vitz, *A City on a Lake: Urban Political Ecology and the Growth of Mexico City* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), chap. 1; Arnaldo Moya Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura, historia y poder bajo el régimen de Porfirio Díaz: Ciudad de México, 1876-1911* (México, D.F.: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2012).

the city center for new colonias that were often clustered around the Paseo de la Reforma to the southwest, although this shift was gradual and incomplete. Poorer residents increasingly found homes in the half circle of crowded *vecindades*—overflowing and poorly-serviced tenements that often crammed multiple families into single rooms clustered around central patios— and temporary lodgings that surrounded the center on its northern, eastern, and southern flanks, just a few blocks from the Zócalo. There, colonias like La Bolsa became notorious for presenting concentrated poverty just a short walk from the modern showcase of the central plaza. Others instead found homes in neighborhoods to the northwest, such as Colonia Guerrero, or near the industrial factories and workshops that emerged in the south of the city, while still others turned to growing suburbs. Sprawling Colonia Santa Julia, for instance, engulfed much of the area between Mexico City and Tacuba and grew to have a population larger than that of the latter town; public services were lacking and living conditions were often noted as grim.⁷³

However, despite the city's increasingly classed spatial divisions, these were never absolute. Many of the most notable upper- and middle-class neighborhoods were only constructed in the last years of the Porfiriato, and many professionals and other respectable denizens of the city continued to reside in the central zones of the capital (although most avoided the poorest areas if they could help it). By the 1900 census, for instance, while there were few professionals living in the densely populated and impoverished first and second *cuarteles* to the east of the Zócalo, the city's third and fourth *cuarteles*, which stretched north and south between

⁷³ Dolores Morales, "La expansión de la ciudad de México en el Siglo XIX: el caso de los fraccionamientos"; Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, chap. 1; Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, chap. 3; Garza, *The Imagined Underworld*, chap. 1; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, chap. 1; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, 64-72 (on Porfirian *vecindades*).

By the 1921 Census, Santa Julia had nearly 17,000 inhabitants, making it one of the largest colonias in the Federal District.

the Zócalo and the Alameda park to the west, had the highest concentrations of lawyers and doctors in the city alongside large numbers of working people.⁷⁴ Moreover, the demands of work, sustenance, and leisure regularly fostered cross-class contact, especially in public spaces and, via domestic work and the needs of food supply, in and around respectable homes.⁷⁵

Many of these patterns established during the Porfiriato would persist to some degree in the decades after. The Revolution brought with it substantial hardship, political turmoil, and the emergence of the urban working class as a political force to be reckoned with, yet in other respects was less a catalyst for change than a disruption.⁷⁶ Instead, massive urban expansion and the (still invariably partial and slow) modernization of the city—through new construction, the extension of public services, industrialization, and the growing impact of new technologies, among other aspects—provoked the greatest changes.⁷⁷ Population growth continued unabated during the Revolution and only increased in the decades afterward. The city surpassed one million inhabitants by 1930, and by 1950, there were some 2.2 million people living in the

⁷⁴ It is difficult to determine, even in general terms, the occupations of the inhabitants of any specific neighborhood. Censuses were usually divided by the city's *cuarteles*, each of which encompassed a wide variety of neighborhoods (or even rural areas) with varying degrees of class identity. As late as the 1900 Census, for example, the eighth cuartel (with a total population of around 18,000) was not yet the site of stately manors in Colonia Roma, and wealthy Colonia Juárez only had 104 inhabitants. The zone did, however, include traditional pueblos like Romita (which, in that year, had over 2,000 inhabitants) as well as various ranches and haciendas—870 residents of the cuartel were classified as *peones del campo*. 2,616 of the cuartel's residents were domestic workers. Unfortunately, the available 1910 Census information does not include a cuartel-by-cuartel breakdown of occupations in the city.

Newspapers give the impression that elites rarely visited poorer areas of the city. In a multi-part series of investigative reports on conditions in impoverished Colonia de la Bolsa published in the major daily *El Imparcial*, the writer rhetorically asked if any readers (imagined as respectable citizens) would dare set foot in the notorious colonia. Ironically, he soon found a colonia resident—a former counterfeiter—who was a reader, and who criticized the paper's portrayals of La Bolsa. "La cuna del crimen," *El Imparcial*, 3, 4, and 6 July 1908.

⁷⁵ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 21, 30–33, and passim; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, 57.

⁷⁶ On the Revolution in Mexico City, see: Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*; Rodríguez Kuri, *Historia del desasosiego*.

⁷⁷ These developments, as well as broader social, cultural, and political changes, significantly reshaped the city. For a kaleidoscopic view of urban changes in the era, see: Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*. For an interrogation of the gendered aspects of urban modernization, see: Ageeth Sluis, *Deco Body, Deco City: Female Spectacle and Modernity in Mexico City, 1900-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

capital. Many outlying municipalities also became increasingly urbanized as the city expanded, and by 1950, 800,000 people lived in the Federal District outside of Mexico City itself.

Migration continued apace and women continued to make up the majority of the population.

Literacy rates continued to be higher in the capital than in the country as a whole, and grew over time; by the 1950 census, 81 percent of the population over age 6 was able to read and write.

Social class and status continued to depend on multiple factors, as had been the case earlier, but economic, social, and political changes reshaped old categories.⁷⁸

Industrialization played a growing role in the postrevolutionary city. Especially from the 1940s onward, political elites promoted developmentalist policies and import substitution industrialization in hopes of turning the city into an industrialized powerhouse to drive the national economy and spearhead national modernization.⁷⁹ The number of industrial establishments (of all sizes) practically doubled over the course of the 1940s.⁸⁰ Industrialization was especially concentrated in the northern reaches of the Federal District, as automobile

⁷⁸ Attempts to fit the city's social structure into traditional working-, middle-, and upper-class categories confronted serious difficulties. One attempt to do so from 1950, for example, frequently noted that many ostensible workers were better categorized as part of the middle class, while property ownership in itself was no guarantee of upper-class status (after all, many smallholders or small shopkeepers lived in poverty or on the lower rungs of respectability). Alberto María Carreño, "Las clases sociales de México," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 12, no. 3 (December 1950): esp. 348.

⁷⁹ There is a wealth of literature on this topic. Alan Knight's "The Mexican Developmental State, c.1920-c.1980," discusses the concept of the "developmental state" and its applicability to Mexico; he further discusses the 1940s shift in "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo." Susan Gauss presents a detailed regional study of industrialism, including in Mexico City. Diane E. Davis, Matthew Vitz, and Gustavo Garza all also discuss the topic from different lenses: Garza directly focuses on industrialization itself, Davis emphasizes its politics, and Vitz highlights how it fit into broader changes in political ecology. Alan Knight, "The Mexican Developmental State, c.1920-c.1980," in *State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain: The Rise and Fall of the Developmental State*, ed. Agustín E. Ferraro and Miguel A. Centeno (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 238–65; Susan M. Gauss, *Made in Mexico: Regions, Nation, and the State in the Rise of Mexican Industrialism, 1920s-1940s* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Alan Knight, "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo, c.1930-c.1946," in *Mexico Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 309–10; Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, chaps. 2–4; Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, chap. 7; Garza, *El proceso de industrialización*, pt. 3, pp. 133–194.

⁸⁰ In 1940, there were 6,957 industrial establishments in the Federal District. That number increased to 12,704 by 1950. Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 208, Cuadro 7.

factories, industrial breweries and bottling facilities, a massive oil refinery, and other industrial plants were constructed in areas like Azcapotzalco, Gustavo A. Madero (formerly Guadalupe Hidalgo), and Santa Julia.⁸¹ The number of people in the Federal District employed in industry, broadly defined (following census categories) as production at any scale, grew enormously: from 75,000 in 1921, to 125,000 in 1930, 175,000 in 1940, and nearly 350,000 by 1950.⁸²

Yet such expansive census categories were misleading, and for all that postrevolutionary industrialization was an order of magnitude greater than its Porfirian predecessor and did create a sizeable class of factory workers, the impact and degree of industrialization should not be overstated. Major modern factories may have attracted the most attention, but in practice much of the city's domestic production continued to be carried out, as in earlier years, in smaller

⁸¹ As Emilio de Antuñano has discussed, urban planners sought to promote industrialization in the north, specifically, as it was closest to infrastructure (the railroad lines and the city's main sewer line) and was largely populated by poorer neighborhoods. In practice, industrial establishments (especially smaller workshops) were built throughout much of the city. de Antuñano, "Planning a 'Mass City,'" 93–94. For a detailed case study on car manufacturing, the Mexico City working class, and space, see: Steven Jon Bachelor, "The Edge of Miracles: Postrevolutionary Mexico City and the Remaking of the Industrial Working Class, 1925-1982" (Ph.D. Dissertation, History, New Haven, Conn., Yale University, 2003), esp. 22-23, 27-29, 99-105 and passim. On the Azcapotzalco refinery, see: Garza, *El proceso de industrialización*, 246–49.

⁸² Statistics based on censuses from 1921, 1930, 1940, and 1950. In most censuses, the numbers given above come simply from the "industrias" category, which includes construction. However, the 1950 Census divided between "industrias de transformación" (286,620 workers) and "industrias de construcción" (62,923 workers). The numbers given above add these two categories together for 1950, as they were united in the previous censuses, in order to provide a better comparison.

The censuses from 1930 and 1940 provide more detailed breakdowns of the different categories of production in the city. In 1930, clothing production employed around 26,000 people. Large numbers of men worked as construction workers (over 14,000) or in related trades like carpentry (over 11,000). Metalworking jobs employed about 11,000 men, and the textile industry employed nearly 10,000, about 20% of whom were women. By 1940, the clothing industry had barely grown, employing a little over 28,000 people (47% of them women). However, the textile industry more than doubled in size (employing 22,000 people, about a quarter of them women), as did metalworking (nearly 25,000 people, almost entirely men). Food production also increased precipitously, employing over 23,000 people (90% men).

Other sources present other numbers. One source that apparently takes a more limited definition of "industry" states that there were over 175,000 industrial workers by 1945, and nearly 245,000 by 1950. Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 208, Cuadro 7.

workshops or even in piecework.⁸³ As late as 1940, some 38% of those employed in garment production worked on their own, rather than in a factory or even in a smaller shop.⁸⁴ Ultimately, even as the capital became a major site of industry by the midcentury, it never quite became the fully-industrialized city of politicians' and planners' dreams. Commerce and domestic work continued to be major sources of employment.⁸⁵ A vast number of people were barely counted in official statistics—the 1950 census, for example, classified a full 9 percent of the workforce under “insufficiently specified activities.”⁸⁶ Many of those who were so classified likely made their way through sporadic and unstable employment. The growth of corporatist politics also reshaped the hierarchies associated with work, as workers in recognized unions increasingly gained access to benefits denied to others in return for their political loyalty.⁸⁷

The city itself expanded significantly, more than doubling in surface area by 1930 and continuing to grow apace afterward.⁸⁸ New upper- and middle-class neighborhoods like Del Valle and La Nápoles were constructed, especially to the west and southwest of the city around

⁸³ By the time of the 1944 Padrón Industrial (portions of which were reprinted in the 1950 Census report on the Federal District), there were only thirteen major *establecimientos industriales oficiales* in the District, as opposed to nearly 15,000 smaller establishments.

⁸⁴ Data in 1940 Census. Unfortunately, the census did not specify whether those who were classified simply as “wage laborers” (*obreros o jornaleros* in the census) worked in large factories or in smaller workshops. Clothing production was something of an outlier in the number of workers who worked on their own, yet it was not uncommon elsewhere: about 20% of all those engaged in metalworking worked on their own, for instance.

⁸⁵ The 1940 census counted 83,000 domestic workers (likely an undercount), most of them women. The 1950 census stated that 17 percent of the city's workforce was engaged in commerce.

⁸⁶ The 1930 and 1940 censuses similarly included enormous, amorphous, and largely unspecified categories, although at least some of those so counted may have been children (who, in contrast, were mostly excluded from the 1950 census category).

⁸⁷ For several examples dealing with the national level, see: Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Michael Snodgrass, “The Golden Age of Charrismo: Workers, Braceros, and the Political Machinery of Postrevolutionary Mexico,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 175–95.

⁸⁸ By 1930, the urbanized area spread out over roughly 90 square kilometers; by the early 1940s, it was about 134 square kilometers. Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, 166; de Antuñano, “Planning a ‘Mass City,’” 182.

Avenida Insurgentes.⁸⁹ Yet the bulk of urban growth was elsewhere. The crescent of *vecindades* around the city center grew dramatically.⁹⁰ However, despite the prevalence of *vecindades* in social scientific and popular imaginings of urban life, most population growth and physical expansion, particularly from the 1930s onward, took place in so-called *colonias proletarias* (“proletarian neighborhoods”) along the city’s periphery, especially to the southeast and north.⁹¹ Although often imagined as paradigmatic informal settlements, constructed by residents without concern for sanitary or building codes and posing a challenge to urban planners, their relations with the government were rather more complicated. In the 1920s and 1930s, many originated in property disputes as dueling claimants sought to strengthen their titles to land by bringing in settlers to build homes and petition for recognition. However, in 1941, *colonia proletaria* construction became a part of official government policy, as authorities saw them as a cheap means of providing housing (with services to be installed piecemeal later) in the growing city. Far from the communities of impoverished squatters they were often portrayed as, *colonias proletarias* were constructed with a high degree of cooperation from government agencies, and they were popular destinations for city residents who saw in them the chance to own property and find a degree of privacy away from the crowded *vecindades*. They tended to attract working and lower-middle class families who had some degree of capital or credit to enable them to build a home. Hundreds of *colonias proletarias* were constructed from the 1940s onward.⁹²

⁸⁹ Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, 101–2.

⁹⁰ By 1930, a *vecindad* room usually cost about five to seven pesos per month, whereas a full apartment with access to sewer service and drinking water generally cost around 20-30 pesos per month, which (especially in the immediate aftermath of the Great Depression) was well over the average monthly salary. Vitz, 165–66.

⁹¹ On the centrality of *vecindades* in imaginings of urban life, see: Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, 64–76; de Antuñano, “Planning a ‘Mass City,’” chap. 4.

⁹² The most extensive historical work on *colonias proletarias* is: de Antuñano, “Planning a ‘Mass City.’” They are also discussed in some detail in Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, chap. 6.

To some extent, the city's expansion changed relationships between work and home. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the majority of the capital's residents lived within a few blocks of where they worked, inserted into circumscribed social networks marked by a high degree of knowledge of ones' neighbors, customers, family, and patrons.⁹³ In contrast, by the midcentury it was increasingly common to live farther from one's place of work. Bus lines sprang up across the city, transporting 336 million passengers annually by 1940.⁹⁴ Despite this increased movement across the growing city, though, the city was never quite the metropolis of anonymity often described (or imagined) by urban observers.⁹⁵ Mexico City certainly had its share of faceless crowds, especially in well-trafficked areas or on packed-to-the-brim buses. Yet capitalinos continued to live and work largely within known social networks; as midcentury anthropologists like Oscar Lewis found, even uprooted rural migrants reconstituted kin networks in the city.⁹⁶ It was in this world of interconnected social relations that hierarchies of gender, class, and patronage operated through quotidian life.

Although the context of the city changed over time, what changed little was the degree to which capitalinos' day-to-day interactions with the police largely took place within this local context of interconnected social relations. It was this arena that gave space for both the collective contestation of policing—that is, the attempt to draw and maintain limits on police authority—

⁹³ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, chap. 1; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, chap. 3.

⁹⁴ Lettieri, "Wheels of Government," 20. As Michael Lettieri notes, bus lines were initially used mainly by the middle and professional classes, but became increasingly used by the working classes by the 1930s.

⁹⁵ Literature on Buenos Aires, for instance, especially on policing, has often emphasized the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a period of growing anonymity. See, for instance: Galeano, *Delinquentes viajeros*; Caimari, *While the City Sleeps*. That said, this overall picture needs to be contrasted with works that have highlighted social networks, such as José C. Moya's work on Spanish immigrants in Buenos Aires. José C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

⁹⁶ Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sánchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family* (New York: Random House, 1961); Larissa Adler de Lomnitz, *Cómo sobreviven los marginados* (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1975).

and the broader negotiation of police power, as city residents sought to deploy police force and discretion in strategic ways and used an array of means in attempts to gain favor.

Chapter 1. Forging the Tools of Liberal Order: Policing and Citizenship in Nineteenth Century Mexico City

Historians have frequently pointed to the 1870s as the beginning of modern policing in Mexico City. The 1879 Gendarmería Municipal, a centralized, professional police organization that would endure for the next several decades, has often been understood as part and parcel of a broader set of institutional changes in criminal law and urban governance in the period through which late nineteenth-century political elites sought to modernize the city and the country.¹ But the Gendarmería Municipal did not emerge in a vacuum: similar institutions had long played a role in policing the city, alongside and in competition with a multitude of other types of police forces, and they had come to dominate the provision of public order since the 1850s. This chapter explores how and why these late nineteenth century changes occurred. In doing so, it highlights how changes in policing in the decades after independence were crucial sites in the making and unmaking of citizenship.

¹ On crime, law, and policing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see: Elisa Speckman Guerra, *Crimen y castigo: legislación penal, interpretaciones de la criminalidad y administración de justicia, Ciudad de México, 1872-1910* (México: El Colegio de México; Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002); Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001); Diego Pulido Esteva, “Gendarmes, inspectores y comisarios: historia del sistema policial en la Ciudad de México, 1870-1930,” *Ler Historia* 70 (2017): 37–58; Laurence John Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City, 1876-1911: A Study of Order and Progress in Porfirian Mexico” (Ph.D. Dissertation, History, Tulane University, 1983). For a sampling of major works on urban modernization in the era, see: Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2003); Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada: el Ayuntamiento de México: política y gobierno, 1876-1912* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Azcapotzalco; El Colegio de México, 1996); Arnaldo Moya Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura, historia y poder bajo el régimen de Porfirio Díaz: Ciudad de México, 1876-1911* (México, D.F.: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2012); Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), chap. 1. The era is also traditionally taken to be the start of an important period of urbanization in broader Latin America urbanization beyond just Mexico. James Scobie, “The Growth of Latin American Cities, 1870-1930,” in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 233–66; José Luis Romero, *Latin America: Its Cities and Ideas* (Washington, D.C.: Organization of American States, 1999).

The challenges of public order, insecurity, and citizenship in post-independence Mexico City provided the impetus for a slew of efforts to reform policing and criminal justice throughout much of the nineteenth century. However, the form that these institutions would take was not predetermined. Throughout the era, policing—broadly conceived as encompassing a range of activities concerned with regulating general public well-being—was carried out by a wide variety of institutions controlled by both the elected city council and the centrally-appointed Federal District government. Some were militarized, others were also professionalized but civilian, and still others relied on the direct participation of unpaid residents. Often, these policing institutions were directly connected to the judicial system, with police functionaries also serving as first-instance judges. From the 1850s to the 1880s in Mexico City, and later in the outlying municipalities, policing increasingly fell under the control of professional corps. The result of was the consolidation of a new policing paradigm, one that would dominate not only the institutional framework but also perceptions of policing and its problems for decades to come. This heralded a narrowing of the possibilities of how citizens could shape the exercise of police power and public space, minimizing alternative visions of what policing could be.

The literature on the rise of professional policing in Mexico has often framed this development as a tale of institutional modernization in which colonial institutions gradually came to be abandoned.² Not only is this narrative teleological and reliant on an ahistorical

² The two main works discussing this change itself remain: Pedro Santoni, “La policía de la Ciudad de México durante el Porfiriato: Los primeros años (1876-1884),” *Historia Mexicana* 33, no. 1 (September 1983): 97–129; Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City, 1876-1911”.

On previous police organizations, José Arturo Yáñez Romero has argued that policing in nineteenth century Mexico City was dominated by the confrontation between new liberal ideals and old regime traditions, leading to an incomplete, failed modernization that continues to persist today. With more nuance, Diego Pulido Esteva has argued that the continuing emphasis in residential policing on honorability and *vecindad* represented a holdover from the colonial era. While there is certainly a great deal of continuity, it is important to note how these concepts took on new meaning connected with ideas of citizenship in the wake of independence. José Arturo Yáñez Romero, *Policía mexicana: cultura política, (in)seguridad y orden público en el gobierno del Distrito Federal, 1821-1876* (Mexico

engagement with the meaning(s) of “modernity,” but it also minimizes the politics surrounding policing reform in the era.³ This is not to suggest that police reform was particularly controversial—as will be seen, the replacement of residential with professional police provoked little dissent, at least in public debate. However, this consensus itself must be explained, looking not just to public discourse, but also to the ways in which residents engaged with new and old models of policing. Historians have also portrayed the rise of professional policing as a straightforward result of the Ayuntamiento losing power to the Federal District government.⁴ However, this interpretation largely glosses over how both the city and federal governments organized both residential and professional police corps; there was a great deal of overlap between the Ayuntamiento and Federal District on the issue. Moreover, the emphasis on the late 1870s has dehistoricized the emergence of professional policing, portraying it as an event rather than a process.⁵ This chapter therefore expands the time frame to the decades before the final formation of a professional police force in Mexico City in 1879. By tracing changing ways of organizing and making use of policing, it seeks to better understand the longstanding tensions between different models of policing and their connection to the provision of justice and ideas of citizenship and rights.

City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, 1999); Diego Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio: experiencias policiales en la Ciudad de México (1824-1861),” *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, June 6, 2017, <https://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/70578>.

³ In an important work, Diego Pulido Esteva has brought attention to the debates surrounding policing in the decades after independence and challenged the old association of policing with urban “modernity.” Vital though it may be, his article does not go past 1850, and as a work of intellectual history is focused more on debates among literate elites carried out in newspapers than on practices. Pulido Esteva, “Policía.”

⁴ See, for instance: Serrano Ortega, “Los virreyes del barrio.”

⁵ Several articles have fruitfully examined the longer history of policing from the late colonial era to the mid-19th century, usefully nuancing our understanding of policing in the era. However, given that they focus on an era in which professional and residential police forces coexisted, these articles on their own do little to explain exactly how and why professional policing would come to predominate by the 1870s. Nacif Mina, “Policía y seguridad pública”; Serrano Ortega, “Los virreyes del barrio”; Pulido Esteva, “Policía.”

Of course, Mexico City was hardly the only place to witness the formation of specialized, professional police corps in the nineteenth century. Across much of Europe and some of the United States, the same decades of change in Mexico City also witnessed the transition to professionalized, bureaucratic police corps.⁶ Specialized, professional police forces emerged throughout the wider Atlantic world, in cities and in the countryside—including in rural Mexico, where the late nineteenth century also saw the emergence of the Rural Police.⁷ Rural and urban policing were part of a broader effort to pacify diverse spaces, making them safe for capitalist investment and into nodes of an international network of “modern” spaces.⁸ But while these places all came to embrace broadly similar institutions, they did so in vastly different local contexts. Traditional European and American accounts of the professionalization of policing tended to view it with reference to two frameworks: as a tool of class domination to control the working classes, especially the industrial proletariat, as a case of bureaucratic rationalization in response to the complexity engendered by massive urban growth, or some combination of the two.⁹ Elements of these frameworks are helpful for explaining the Mexican case: the police were

⁶ For a concise introduction, see: Clive Emsley, *Policing and Its Context: 1750-1850* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984).

⁷ On the Mexican *rurales*, see: Paul J. Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development*, Revised and Enlarged Edition (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1992). For the growth of similar rural police in Europe, see: Clive Emsley, *Gendarmes and State in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Unusually, while European gendarmes were militarized rural police, in Mexico the term denoted civilian urban police.

⁸ Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, *La paz: 1876* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2018).

⁹ On the classic literature: Eric Monkkonen has argued for the emergence of modern policing as an aspect of bureaucratic rationalization, while Roger Lane has emphasized the role of urban growth in forcing a response. Robert D. Storch and Sidney L. Harring have focused instead on class control. Samuel Walker frames his work as a blend between Marxist approaches emphasizing class control and urbanization-centric approaches. Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America: 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Roger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1885* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Robert D. Storch, “The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880,” *Journal of Social History* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 481–509; Sidney L. Harring, *Policing a Class Society: The Experience of American Cities, 1865-1915* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983); Samuel Walker, *A Critical History of Police Reform: The Emergence of Professionalism* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1977). Similar themes continue to echo in more recent works. Sam Mitrani’s history of the origins of Chicago’s

certainly envisioned as a means of controlling and disciplining the lower and working classes, and observers throughout the century regularly complained that Mexico City's large population required more effective policing. However, police reform predated most of the city's population growth, instead taking place in an era of demographic stagnation. It also predated the development of anything resembling a classic industrial proletariat.¹⁰ Moreover, while the implementation of professional policing in Mexico City certainly had an international dimension, this process cannot be reduced to international trends alone. Mexican intellectuals and politicians were aware of the development of professional police forces abroad, but this played only a minor role in shaping policing until the 1870s (and arguably has been overstated for that period). Ultimately, as in other Latin American countries, the politicians and bureaucrats who wrote and rewrote Mexico's police regulations responded in similar ways to similar issues that motivated police reform elsewhere. But their proposals were driven by internal developments as well as ideological similarities that crossed borders.¹¹

professional police in the mid-nineteenth century emphasizes their role in class control over the city's immigrant population. While Adam Malka highlights the role of race in policing in nineteenth-century Baltimore—seeking to explain how police and courts came to disproportionately target Black Baltimoreans in the immediate aftermath of emancipation, and arguing that this represented a shift toward state control of racial policing that had previously been carried out by vigilantism—he traces the origins of professional policing itself in the city to growing fears over property crime in an era of urban growth. Sam Mitrani, *The Rise of the Chicago Police Department: Class and Conflict, 1850-1894* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Adam Malka, *The Men of Mobtown: Policing Baltimore in the Age of Slavery and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

¹⁰ The same point has been made regarding the modern penitentiary, which in Latin America also predated industrialization. Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre, "The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Toward an Interpretive Social History of Prisons," in *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Essays in Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830-1940*, ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre (Austin: University of Texas Press, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1996), 27–30.

¹¹ The best institutional history of policing in Latin America, Thomas Holloway's *Policing Rio de Janeiro*, emphasizes that policing in Rio was *sui generis*, discarding foreign models in favor of militarized police that acted in large part to control slaves in the urban environment. Thomas Holloway, *Policing Rio de Janeiro: Repression and Resistance in a 19th-Century City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). See also: Pulido Esteva, "Policía," 1627.

The stakes of this history go beyond merely pushing back the timeframe of police professionalization by a few decades. Policing offers a useful viewpoint from which to examine the quotidian construction and contestation of citizenship and public authority after independence.¹² Residentially-organized policing sought to make public order consistent with republican citizenship by conceiving of the maintenance of order as a duty of citizenship. Capitalinos used participation in residential policing as a way of claiming power to shape public spaces and behaviors in ways that often differed from how more centralized, professional police forces operated. However, residential policing never was able to resolve the contradictions—

¹² Historians have barely begun to scratch the surface of disorder, law, and policing in Mexico City (and the rest of the country, for that matter) in the period from 1821 to 1876. This contrasts markedly with the late colonial era and the period from the Porfiriato through the Revolution, both of which have a rather more robust historiography. Important preliminary works dealing with 1821-1876 in Mexico City include: Diego Castillo Hernández, “La ley y el honor: jueces menores en la Ciudad de México, 1846-1850,” *Signos Históricos* 26 (December 2011): 78–109; Graciela Flores Flores, *La justicia criminal ordinaria en tiempos de transición. La construcción de un nuevo orden judicial (Ciudad de México, 1824-1871)* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, 2019); Graciela Flores Flores, *La ciudad judicial: una aproximación a los lugares de y para la justicia criminal en la Ciudad de México (1824-1846)* (México: Tirant lo Blanch, 2020); Nacif Mina, “Policía y seguridad pública”; Pulido Esteva, “Policía”; Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio”; Elisa Speckman Guerra, “Construcción y características del orden jurídico penal (1824-1871),” in *Del Tigre de Santa Julia, la princesa italiana y otras historias. Sistema judicial, criminalidad y justicia en la ciudad de México (siglos XIX y XX)* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Penales, 2014), 3–18; Anne Staples, “Policía y Buen Gobierno: Municipal Efforts to Regulate Public Behavior, 1821-1857,” in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, ed. William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1994), 115–26; Vanesa E. Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización: honor, trabajo y solidaridades artesanales en la ciudad de México a mediados del siglo XIX* (México: El Colegio de México, 2008), chaps. 1–3; Yáñez Romero, *Policía Mexicana*.

See also: Silvia Marina Arrom's excellent case study of the Mexico City Poor House, Juan Hugo Sánchez García's work on policing in Oaxaca from the mid-1800s through the Porfiriato, and Timo Schaefer's pathbreaking research on policing and municipal government in provincial Mexico. Silvia Marina Arrom, *Containing the Poor: The Mexico City Poor House, 1774-1871* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000); Juan Hugo Sánchez García, “Los Guardianes de Oaxaca: gobierno local, gendarmes y espacio urbano en la ciudad de Oaxaca durante el Porfiriato,” in *Orden, policía y seguridad: historia de las ciudades*, ed. Marcela Dávalos, Regina Hernández Franyuti, and Diego Pulido Esteva (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2017), 117–48; Timo H. Schaefer, *Liberalism as Utopia: The Rise and Fall of Legal Rule in Post-Colonial Mexico, 1820-1900* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), chaps. 1-2.

A full accounting of this era is beyond the scope of this chapter and the project as a whole. It would require, beyond the police regulations and arrest records that form the basis of much of this chapter, an analysis of a large and ever-changing body of laws themselves, case records from many separate courts (the lower-level verbal courts of police officials and Jueces Menores, the Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Distrito Federal, and the Tribunal de Vagos), and a more detailed look at newspaper sources, at the very least.

between public order and respect for rights, and between legal equality and social hierarchy—at the heart of liberalism. By the midcentury, dissatisfaction with residential policing from authorities and city dwellers alike led to an increasing shift away from residential policing, a change that was solidified by ideological, political, and social changes later in the nineteenth century.

Citizenship and Public Order

In comparison with the bustling viceregal capital of the past, or the vast twentieth-century metropolis that was yet to come, Mexico City in the decades after independence was economically and demographically stagnant.¹³ Yet profound socio-political ferment bubbled under the surface. Independence gave rise to intense contestation around citizenship as a wide range of Mexicans debated the meanings and practices of citizenship, and the category's reach and exclusions, whether in the countryside or in the capital city.¹⁴ Although questions of electoral participation have loomed large in historians' analyses, the making and maintenance of

¹³ On Mexico's long-lasting recession after independence, see: Coatsworth, "Obstacles to Economic Growth," 82; Cárdenas Sánchez, *El largo curso de la economía mexicana*, 141–87.

¹⁴ Historians long presented the frequent coups and rebellions in newly independent Latin America as signs of failed political modernization in which notions of citizenship remained largely rhetorical in the face of regular military interventions and chaotic elections. However, more recent scholarship has instead emphasized persistent practices and understandings to argue that the region was characterized instead by a high degree of popular mobilization in which claims to citizenship certainly mattered for many. For an extremely useful and concise synthesis of this recent research, see: Hilda Sabato, *Republics of the New World: The Revolutionary Political Experiment in 19th-Century Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). For a similarly international perspective, see: James E. Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014). For two influential works on popular liberalism in the countryside, see: Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800-1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Peter Guardino, *The Time of Liberty: Popular Political Culture in Oaxaca, 1750-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). For a clearly argued and influential example of scholarship that views citizenship as unachieved in 19th-century Mexico, see: Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo, *Ciudadanos imaginarios: memorial de los afanes y desventuras de la virtud y apología del vicio triunfante en la República Mexicana: tratado de moral pública* (México: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, 1992).

public order was also a crucial site for grappling with the meaning and practice of citizenship in an unequal society.¹⁵ Debates over citizenship and public order also played out in the context of long-simmering tensions over local government between the elected Ayuntamientos (the city councils, both of Mexico City and of each of the outlying municipalities in the Federal District) and the presidentially-appointed Federal District governor.¹⁶ Over the course of the nineteenth century, elected city councils gradually lost responsibilities (and tax revenue) to the centralizing Federal District government, culminating in a 1903 law that reduced the city councils to mere advisory boards.¹⁷ However, complete centralization was hardly inevitable in the early decades after independence, and the conflict between the federal and municipal governments strongly impinged on questions of policing and citizenship.

How to define citizenship—considered not merely as electoral participation, but more broadly as the ability to participate in and shape the exercise of political authority—was hotly debated after independence as a wider swath of the population claimed access to political

¹⁵ See, for example: Marcello Carmagnani and Alicia Hernández Chávez, “La ciudadanía orgánica mexicana, 1850-1910,” in *Ciudadanía política y formación de las naciones: Perspectivas históricas de América Latina*, ed. Hilda Sabato (México: El Colegio de México; Fideicomiso Historia de las Américas; Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 371–404; Juan Ortiz Escamilla, “De súbditos a ciudadanos en la Ciudad de México, 1800-1857,” in *Ciudad de México: La política como voluntad y representación, 1800-2012*, ed. María Eugenia Terrones López (México: Instituto Mora, 2017), 17–40; Richard A. Warren, *Vagrants and Citizens: Politics and the Masses in Mexico City from Colony to Republic* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2001); Antonio Annino, “Ciudadanía ‘versus’ gobernabilidad republicana en México: los orígenes de un dilema,” in *Ciudadanía política y formación de las naciones: perspectivas históricas de América Latina*, ed. Hilda Sabato (México: El Colegio de México; Fideicomiso Historia de las Américas; Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 62–93; Silvia Marina Arrom, “Popular Politics in Mexico City: The Parian Riot, 1828,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (May 1988): 245–68; Sonia Pérez Toledo, “Movilización social y poder político en la Ciudad de México en la década de 1830,” in *Prácticas populares, cultura política y poder en México, siglo XIX*, ed. Brian F. Connaughton (México: Casa Juan Pablos; Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa, 2008), 335–67; Dulce Regina Tapia Chávez, “El pueblo y el poder. Los comportamientos políticos de los capitalinos a mediados del siglo XIX” (Ph.D. Dissertation, History, México, El Colegio de México, 2014).

¹⁶ For a detailed examination of the Federal District’s development, see: Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 17–156.

¹⁷ On the gradual decline of Mexico City’s city council, see: Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada*; Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 99 and passim.

decision-making. As Antonio Annino, Marcello Carmagnani, and Alicia Hernández Chávez have argued, the “citizen” in nineteenth-century Mexico was in large part coterminous with the older idea of the “vecino.” During the colonial era, status as a vecino denoted being known and holding a certain respectable status within a defined community, and allowed vecinos a say in municipal governance. After independence, political citizenship continued to be largely defined in such terms, especially as municipalities were responsible for determining who was eligible for suffrage, and as indirect elections at the state and national level made the municipality the site of the most direct forms of democracy.¹⁸ Moreover, building on late colonial-era precedent, honor and public respectability became more widely accessible as a key component of citizenship, at the same time that the exclusions of citizenship became increasingly debated as different social groups fought for their place in the new republic: honor as a category served to resolve the tension between proclaimed juridical equality and entrenched social hierarchies, mediating access to citizenship in gendered, classed, and raced ways.¹⁹

¹⁸ Annino, “Ciudadanía ‘versus’ gobernabilidad republicana”; Carmagnani and Hernández Chávez, “La ciudadanía orgánica mexicana”. Annino notes that the main difference between colonial and post-independence ideas of vecindad is that, after independence, indigenous peoples could also become vecinos. Although “vecino” is today translated as “neighbor,” that definition misses its previous association with long-established residence and public respectability. As late as 1905, a Mexican legal dictionary defined “vecino” as “one who has established his home in the *pueblo* with the intention of remaining in it,” suggesting a sense of deep-rootedness. Antonio de J. Lozano and Joaquín Escriche, *Diccionario razonado de legislación y jurisprudencia mexicanas* (México: J. Balleca y Compañía, 1905), 1144. On the medieval and early modern Spanish roots of the idea of vecindad, see: Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003). The idea of vecindad was also important in citizenship elsewhere in Latin America. Sabato, *Republics of the New World*, 52–53, 210n4.

¹⁹ During the colonial era, honor—which was originally defined as an attribute only of the elite—was increasingly claimed by plebeians. On honor in the colonial era, see: Lyman Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, eds., *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998). The essays in *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America* probe the changing role of honor in citizenship after independence across Latin America; the introduction provides a concise guide to broader patterns, while Rossana Barragán's essay is a particularly clear case study of independence-era changes in Bolivia. Sueann Caulfield, Sarah C. Chambers, and Lara Putnam, eds., *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005); Lara Putnam, Sarah C. Chambers, and Sueann Caulfield, “Introduction: Transformations in Honor, Status, and Law over the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America*, ed. Sueann Caulfield, Sarah C. Chambers, and Lara Putnam (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 1–24; Rossana Barragán, “The ‘Spirit’ of Bolivian Laws: Citizenship, Patriarchy, and

Ideas of citizenship were closely linked to debates about public order and crime. Newspapers regularly complained about the capital's purportedly numerous "criminals, layabouts [*vagos*], and rogues" (as *El Cosmopolita* wrote in 1838), and new police regulations were readily justified with reference to a seemingly permanent state of insecurity.²⁰ Rhetoric around crime and disorder did not reach the level that it would during the Porfiriato, when (as will be touched on in Chapter Two), urbanization, changing ideas of modernity, and the growth of print media pushed fears of crime to new heights, yet it was nonetheless an ever-present concern. In part, this reflected anxieties over popular participation in politics.²¹ It also reflected debates over the boundaries of citizenship—if the citizen was the basis of the republic, then purportedly uncivil behavior threatened the republic. Public authorities and periodicals alike regularly condemned begging, gambling, and drinking among the lower and working classes, as well as supposed vices like irregular family structures or idleness, as threatening the foundations of public order and as antithetical to republican citizenship.²² The criminalization of "idleness"

Infamy," in *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America*, ed. Sueann Caulfield, Sarah C. Chambers, and Lara Putnam (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 66–86.

²⁰ Untitled, *El Cosmopolita*, 2 June 1838, 5. For similar examples from other periods, see the denunciation of "the plague of wrongdoers in the very heart of the cities" (from "Seguridad pública," *El Siglo XIX*, 6 March 1845, 4), or the complaints of numerous pickpockets in: "Policía," *El Monitor Republicano*, 15 May 1849, 4.

For examples from regulations: one 1834 decree noted "the state of insecurity in which the city disgracefully finds itself, [and] the violent crimes that are committed against the life and property of the inhabitants." AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Bandos 1825-1925, Caja 6, Exp. 48: 4 February 1834. In 1847, authorities wrote that theft and violence were "so frequent in this capital" (Ibid., Caja 16, Exp. 4: 11 January 1847), and in 1848, denounced "the wrongdoers who disgracefully abound" in the city (AHGM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3691, Exp. 120: 24 November 1848).

²¹ Most notably, after the 1828 Parián Riot, in which a disputed election led to the destruction of a major market, authorities sought to impose greater social control over the city's population. Arrom, "Popular Politics in Mexico City"; Richard Warren, "Mass Mobilization versus Social Control: Vagrancy and Political Order in Early Republican Mexico," in *Reconstructing Criminality in Latin America*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Robert Buffington (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 48–50. Such fears were not limited to Mexico City, but were widespread. See: Torcuato S. Di Tella, "The Dangerous Classes in Early Nineteenth Century Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 5, no. 1 (May 1973): 79–105.

²² Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 25–30; Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización*, 125–30. These were not entirely new concerns: on colonial-era antecedents, see: Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos? Diversiones públicas y vida social en la ciudad de México durante el Siglo de las Luces* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987);

(*vagancia*), and similar offenses against order, served in practice as a means of discursively restricting the rights of the urban lower and working classes, who often had unstable occupations, constructing them as incorrigibly unfit for the exercise of citizenship and lacking a legitimate place in the expanded political sphere of rights engendered by the new republic.²³

City residents regularly made use of, and contributed to, such rhetoric as a means of legitimizing their own citizenship claims over public services. In petitions to authorities and letters to newspaper editors, capitalinos regularly linked disorder and crime as threats to a patriarchal, broadly republican social order, and demanded that authorities respond.²⁴ One 1830 letter to the editors of *El Sol*, for instance, that was signed only “an angry man” (*un enfadado*), complained of “a rabble of idlers” who habitually drank in a local pulquería at all hours of the day, “their obscene songs and most idiotic sayings, [and] their boasting” impinging on residents’ “peacefulness, moderation, and what is more, the good example that all heads of family desire for their innocent children”; he demanded that authorities take action.²⁵ Similarly, an 1853 petition to the city council by ten residents of the Plazuela de Santa Clarita complained that various “wrongdoers” had had formed “hideouts” in the nearby ruins of an abandoned building.

Pamela Voekel, “Peeing on the Palace: Bodily Resistance to Bourbon Reforms in Mexico City,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5, no. 2 (June 1992): 183–208; Arrom, *Containing the Poor*, 14, 21. The main difference lay in that colonial-era disorder was conceived of as a threat to imperial incomes and colonial rule, while post-independence disorder threatened the republic with internal dissolution.

²³ On *vagancia*, class, and citizenship in post-independence Mexico City, see: Alejandra Araya Espinoza, “De los límites de la modernidad a la subversión de la obscenidad: vagos, mendigos y populacho en México, 1821-1871,” in *Culturas de pobreza y resistencia: estudios de marginados, proscritos y descontentos, México, 1804-1910*, ed. Romana Falcón (México; Querétaro: El Colegio de México; Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, 2005).

²⁴ This impulse spanned the political spectrum and was not solely the province of conservatives. Indeed, as Charles Hale has pointed out, by the 1830s Mexican liberals had come to believe that “the problem was no longer to guarantee individual liberty by constitutional limitation upon arbitrary power, but rather to reform Mexican society so that individualism could have some meaning.” Although Hale focuses on how this belief shaped liberals’ emphasis on education, this attitude undoubtedly shaped the suppression of crime and disorder as well. Charles Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968), 111.

²⁵ “Comunicado,” *El Sol*, 25 March 1830, 4. Similar letters were published frequently, such as one signed “The enemy of the wicked” [*El enemigo de los malvados*] that complained of disorderly and criminal pulquería customers and called for their arrest. “Comunicado,” *El Gladiador*, 10 August 1830, 3-4.

Not only did they commit robberies, but they were also “hiding themselves with women” and threatening familial norms. As the petitioners stated, “so many disorders are committed causing harm to [norms of] modesty and the children, without anyone being able to correct them as it is the fortune of the wrongdoers that all the neighbors are peaceful.”²⁶ Disorder thus was widely defined and seen as a threat to patriarchal family order and thus to republican society. In writing such letters, city dwellers established their own credentials as good citizens through implicit contrast with those they denounced. Little information is available on the people who wrote such petitions—although they largely appear to have been male heads of households, and were more likely than not literate (although public scribes were available to allow illiterate people to petition as well)—but what is notable is that their claims to shape public authority were made on the basis of their supposed conformity with patriarchal norms and ideals of good citizenship.²⁷ Yet petitions were hardly the only way that citizens could attempt to shape the exercise of urban governance. It is thus to the long-running debates over citizens’ participation in policing that this chapter now turns.

Policing and Justice in the Midcentury City

Nineteenth-century city authorities employed a variety of police forces with vastly different forms of organization, from professional police corps, to military forces, to models based on the participation of elected officials and residents. That policing in Mexico City would

²⁶ “... cuantos desórdenes se cometen con injuria del pudor y de la niñez, sin poder corregirlos ninguno por ser fortuna de los malvados que todos los vecinos son pacíficos.” AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3691, Exp. 144: 5 August 1853.

²⁷ For similar petitions demanding authorities close nearby pulquerías, see: “Remitido,” *El Monitor Republicano*, 28 February 1846, 3; AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Policía en General, Vol. 3632, Exp. 355: 30 June 1848.

become the domain of a salaried, professional, centralized corps rather than a civic duty tied to citizenship and shared by residents and elected officials was by no means a foregone conclusion at the midcentury. The following pages therefore trace this shift and the reasons behind it, while also suggesting its broader implications for the ordering of urban life. They suggest, first, that against understandings of residential policing as a straightforward continuation of late-colonial institutions, or as a failure to attain modernization, it instead represented an attempt to revise traditional models of order to bring them more in line with new notions of citizenship, placing residency and respectability as key mediators in the organization of justice and public order at a local level. Second, they suggest that policing shifted from a largely residential model to a professional model due to a combination of factors, ranging from changing elite attitudes, mounting criticisms of abuses by residential police, and city residents' own opposition to participation in residential policing. Ultimately, policing (whether residential or professional) highlighted the contradictions of liberalism.

The police reforms of the late 1870s had deep roots and were a major inflection point in a process that had begun a century earlier. Prior to the late eighteenth century, policing had been carried out on an ad hoc basis by residents and a wide variety of officials; however, authorities now sought to expand the reach of the state.²⁸ The Bourbon Reforms of the late colonial era provided the first sustained effort to fundamentally reshape the provision of public order and justice. Driven by efforts to improve the imperial economy, colonial officials embarked on an

²⁸ Tamar Herzog has argued, using Quito as a case study, that the Spanish colonies prior to the Bourbon reforms were characterized by a thorough blending of “state” and “society” rather than a separation of the two. The result was that residents—whether they were mere passersby or had been given ad hoc commissions by patrons holding judicial office—carried out the bulk of arrests. Mexico City’s position as a viceregal capital likely gave its judicial officials greater access to hired, armed guards than in Quito, where the formal police force consisted of only a handful of people, but Herzog’s overall argument is likely still applicable. Tamar Herzog, *Upholding Justice: Society, State, and the Penal System in Quito (1650-1750)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), esp. 167-170.

ambitious and wide-reaching series of reforms throughout the empire. As a key node in the imperial administration, and as the site of a significant population boom in the late eighteenth century, Mexico City was particularly targeted for reform. Reformist authorities sought to reduce corporate loyalties, promote sanitary and “rational” public behavior, and prevent and punish disorder, while also building authorities’ useable knowledge about local situations.²⁹ The result was a new focus on the administration of what was termed *policía*, which encompassed a broad array of meanings centering on the notion of urban good governance. Public order and the arrest of criminals were as much a part of *policía* as were the cleanliness of public spaces, the decoration of buildings, and the paving and straightening of streets; one typical formulation described it as “the *policía* of public health, of convenience and decoration, of order and security.”³⁰ *Policía* was seen as connecting political authorities—especially the city council—to the running of an orderly and specifically urban society through the exercise of authority in the public interest; while its meaning came to be ever more associated with crime control and public order as time passed, it was to retain many of its older meanings well into the nineteenth century.³¹ Reformers introduced a number of institutional changes to ensure the provision of *policía*. In 1782, the city was divided into eight cuarteles mayores and further subdivided into 32

²⁹ Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos?*; Voekel, “Peeing on the Palace”; Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, 1–20; Haslip-Viera, *Crime and Punishment in Late Colonial Mexico City*; Michael C. Scardaville, “(Hapsburg) Law and (Bourbon) Order: State Authority, Popular Unrest, and the Criminal Justice System in Bourbon Mexico City,” in *Reconstructing Criminality in Latin America*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Robert M. Buffington (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 1–17.

The Bourbon reforms also marked a decline in the Church’s role in maintaining urban public order. Dávalos, “De la policía religiosa a la secularización.”

³⁰ “... la policía de salubridad, de comodidad y ornato, y orden y seguridad”. The quote is from 1840 ordinances. *Colección de leyes y disposiciones gubernativas municipales y de policía, vigentes en el Distrito Federal, formada por acuerdo del C. Gobernador Lic. Carlos Rivas y publicada bajo la dirección del Secretario de Gobierno C. Lic. Nicolas Islas y Bustamente* (México: Imprenta y Litografía de Ireneo Paz, 1884), Vol. I, 115.

³¹ Pulido Esteva, “Policía”; Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada*, 36–43. In 1846, the interim Governor of the Federal District claimed that “attending promptly and effectively to *policía de seguridad*” was “one of the first duties” of political authorities. AHCM, Bandos, Caja 15, Exp. 105.

cuarteles menores. In each cuartel menor, an honorable male resident was appointed Alcalde de Barrio, an unpaid position with a range of duties ranging from ensuring the enforcement of laws and municipal regulations on everything from crime to hygiene, to maintaining a census, to verbally resolving minor disputes outside of the courts. In 1790, authorities created a corps of *guardafaroleros* (also termed *serenos*), salaried watchmen intended to maintain streetlights while also providing nighttime vigilance.³² The cuarteles system, with its attendant residential officials, and the *guardafaroleros* would both provide the basis for future police institutions.

After independence in 1821, city authorities cycled through a long series of institutional changes in policing. Authorities decreed the formation of dozens of distinct police forces, many lasting only a short time in practice, as well as a variety of institutional changes and reform projects.³³ Some of this rapid turnover was due to the chaotic political situation in the post-independence decades, as recurrent military coups, rebellions, and foreign invasions repeatedly destabilized governments; the 1847-1848 U.S. occupation of Mexico City and its aftermath, in particular, generated a number of police reform efforts, as will be discussed. But institutional instability only provides a partial explanation; debates over effectiveness and abuse of power

³² Regina Hernández Franyuti, “La organización y el control del territorio de la Ciudad de México, una nueva práctica de la policía a finales del siglo XVIII,” in *Orden, policía y seguridad: historia de las ciudades*, ed. Marcela Dávalos, Regina Hernández Franyuti, and Diego Pulido Esteva (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2017), 45–66; Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos?*, 233–37.

³³ Diego Pulido Esteva has counted as least fourteen separate police forces that were created between 1822 and 1862, and even this extensive list does not include several decrees (including several that would have impacted the Federal District municipalities more than Mexico City itself); it also largely ignores modifications to regulations, and does not mention regulatory projects. Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio,” fig. 2. For several regulations not listed, see: AHCM, Bandos, Caja 16, Exp. 4: 11 January 1847, Arreglo para la policía preventiva y seguridad del Distrito Federal; *Ibid.*, Caja 21, Exp. 50: 27 June 1853, Reglamento para la formación de compañías de infantería y caballería en sustitución del batallón y escuadrón de policía en el Distrito Federal; *Ibid.*, Caja 24, Exp. 90: 27 July 1854, Disposiciones sobre la formación y el funcionamiento de la fuerza de policía del Distrito. For one (possibly unrealized) project to create an Ayuntamiento-dependant corps of Inspectores de Cuartel, see: AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía en General, Vol. 3633, Exp. 476: Copia del proyecto de reglamento [1860]. As the table only goes to 1862, it does not include a number of police regulations after that year, which are discussed below.

were also influential. Rather than give an exhaustive list of institutional changes, the following pages instead present the general outlines of different structures of policing, as well as the logic underlying them.

Policing regulations and proposals from the decades following independence highlight the coexistence of three modes of organizing and legitimizing policing: what might be termed military police, professional police, and residential police. First, the military, and closely related militarized police, regularly played a prominent role in security in the city and its surroundings. The capital's garrison regularly patrolled the city, although the military's tendency to participate in coups and rebellions made it increasingly fall into disfavor with the political elite, and it was gradually removed from a substantial role in daily order by the 1870s.³⁴ Besides the city garrison, militarized police forces also played a role in security, especially in the latter half of the century. Decrees from the conservative government in 1853 and 1854, for instance, created a centralized police force divided into companies of rifle-toting "infantry" and "cavalry" organized along military lines. Although they notably lacked the military *fuero* and were not technically part of the Army, regulations stipulated that members were to be able to move with ease back and forth between the military and the militarized police without losing their rank.³⁵ These police forces were soon disbanded by the succeeding liberal government. However, liberal president Benito Juárez also created the heavily militarized, centrally-controlled Rural Police Corps in 1861, which despite its national scope maintained its strongest presence in the towns and roads surrounding the capital.³⁶

³⁴ Rohlfs, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City," 13–15.

³⁵ AHCM, *Bandos*, Caja 21, Exp. 50: 27 June 1853; and *Ibid.*, Caja 24, Exp. 90: 27 July 1854.

³⁶ Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress*, 49, 120–24; Pérez Ricart, "La temprana (y permanente) militarización de la seguridad pública," 7–8.

In contrast, the other two modes of policing, which proved to be the main sites for debates, were civil rather than military. One model was of a professional—that is, composed of salaried employees—police corps, usually armed to some degree (whether with firearms or swords), outfitted with a uniform, and often organized according to a strict hierarchy of rank. The other model, what I will term residential police, centered on the participation of city residents—usually unpaid, and at times coerced into service—in a variety of positions, ranging from powerful police officials imbued with judicial authority to hear cases and pass sentences, to ordinary members of nightly *rondas*, forced (under threat of arrest) to provide the manpower to patrol the dark streets of their neighborhood. Importantly, residential police were almost always limited to policing the administrative divisions where they resided.³⁷

During the first decades after independence, city and federal officials repeatedly sought to establish professional police forces, with mixed success. The two longest-running professional police forces were both controlled by the Ayuntamiento. The *serenos* streetlight guards persisted throughout the century, in part due to the need to physically light the streetlights every night. Municipal *celadores*, too, were organized as a salaried, professional force, although their tasks focused on the city's cleanliness and ensuring compliance with an assortment of municipal ordinances and regulations.³⁸ In theory, neither force was particularly focused on security, although in practice (as will be discussed) the *serenos* remained one of the chief crime control institutions for much of the century.³⁹ In contrast, the Federal District government repeatedly

³⁷ Diego Pulido Esteva has termed such police forces *policía de proximidad*, emphasizing their close connections to residents. Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio,” fig. 1.

³⁸ *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. I; 284-287: Regulation of 26 May 1848 (Celadores de Policía).

³⁹ On the *celadores*, see: Ibid.; Nacif Mina, “Policía y seguridad pública,” 24–26.

attempted to set up professional police forces that were focused on crime and security, with more ambivalent results. One early attempt in 1826 was dismantled within a few months over concerns about police brutality and abuses of power.⁴⁰ Federal officials tried again, including in 1832, 1834, 1838, and 1845, but repeatedly ran into the same challenges, as well as difficulties with consistently funding salaried police corps. While some efforts ran for longer than others, the overall result was an only intermittently functioning professional police force under federal control; in any case, such forces were generally small in size, perhaps a few hundred men at most, and complemented rather than replaced other forces—especially residential police.⁴¹

Residential Policing and Justice

From the 1820s to the late 1840s, residential policing dominated the provision of order in Mexico City. Residential *ronda* patrols provided the bulk of police manpower, and, as will be discussed in more depth later, made the majority of arrests (Table 1.1).⁴² Meanwhile,

1862 regulations for the *Resguardo Nocturno* (e.g., *guardafaroleros* or *serenos*) placed particular emphasis on maintaining the street lamps, although they also required them “to arrest the wrongdoers or thieves that they encounter.” AHCM, Bandos, Caja 34, Exp. 44: Regulation, Resguardo Nocturno, 1 August 1862.

⁴⁰ Pulido Esteva, “Policía,” 1618–21; Nacif Mina, “Policía y seguridad pública,” 37–38.

⁴¹ Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio.” para. 11-14.

The 1845 police *Cuerpo de Policía* established a force of 140 men (100 on horseback and the rest on foot) besides several officers. AHCM, Bandos, Caja 15, Exp. 3: Regulations of 26 June and 26 September 1845.

In 1830, the commandant of the *Cuerpo de Seguridad Pública* wrote to the newspaper *El Gladiador* to defend his institution from charges that it was responsible for continuing insecurity; he instead blamed “the quantity of thieves and wrongdoers” and “the substantial number of *vagos*.” He wrote that the corps consisted of 250 men, but that so many of them were used for other purposes by the federal government that it was impossible to organize regular patrols, and in practice the city could only count on “a handful of men” for security. “Comunicados,” *El Gladiador*, 9 September 1830, 1-3.

⁴² Similarly, in many of Mexico’s small- and mid-size towns, the Civic Militia served as the chief police force. Officials largely framed this as a cost-saving measure; however, Timo Schaefer has argued that the non-professional, locally-organized Civic Militia was vital in the creation of a decidedly republican legal order based on citizens’ participation. While the Federal District’s *rondas* seem to have been administratively separate from the militia, they were similarly justified as an inexpensive means of preserving order, while still placing citizens’ participation at the center of urban policing. Schaefer, *Liberalism as Utopia*, 79–89.

Jore Nacif Mina and Diego Pulido Esteva agree that residential police--what Nacif Mina terms *policía* civil and Pulido Esteva *policía de proximidad*--was the dominant way of organizing policing until the midcentury. Nacif Mina, “Policía y seguridad pública,” 40–44; Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio.”

appointed—or in some cases elected—residents served as neighborhood police officials, similar to the colonial-era *Alcaldes de Barrio*, leading *rondas* and hearing minor court cases. Despite significant continuities with colonial institutions, official rhetoric and regulations sought to reframe residential policing as following new ideals of citizenship, invoking citizens' responsibilities and knowledge as well as the protections of rights theoretically offered by a non-militarized police force composed of citizen-residents.⁴³ As will be seen, such rhetoric struggled to find secure footing, and by the 1850s, officials began to shift ever more toward favoring professional policing. Nonetheless, residential policing posed an alternative that predominated for decades.

Authorities frequently issued new regulations on residential policing; however, the basic structure underwent relatively little change. In general, residential policing was organized by the *Ayuntamiento*, derived from its traditional responsibilities for *buen policía* (although in practice Federal officials regularly played a role in their formation): the 1845 Municipal Ordinances, for instance, established that city councils in the Federal District had responsibility for preserving “tranquility and public order,” authorizing them to thus establish *rondas* “counting on the assistance of the citizens who are to take their turns equally.”⁴⁴ In a typical regulation from 1834, the Federal District Governor decreed that in Mexico City and the surrounding municipalities, well-respected members of communities were to be appointed to the post of *Oficial Auxiliar de Manzana*, given authority over their city block to organize and lead trustworthy neighborhood residents in nightly *rondas* (twice per night, each composed of four

⁴³ Importantly, this represented an attempted reversal from the late colonial era, when *Alcaldes* were widely seen as corrupt and abusive. Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos?*, 241.

⁴⁴ *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. I, 211-244: Ordenanzas Municipales, 17 November 1845, especially 228-229.

men), making arrests, breaking up fights, and keeping a vigilant eye on all those who for whatever reason could be viewed as suspicious. Moreover, patrol members were to be armed, as were “citizens who are heads of family,” in the name of the “conservation of order.” Although the measure had been decreed by the Governor, it stipulated that policing was to fall under the supervision of members of the city council.⁴⁵ Other regulations used different territorial divisions. A decree from late 1846 established that each of the city’s thirty-two *cuartel menor* divisions were to have three *rondas* per night, each lasting several hours and composed of five men led by local officials.⁴⁶ Less than two weeks later, in response to concerns that there were still too few police, authorities established a denser hierarchy of residential officials. Unlike the 1834 and 1846 decrees, which charged the Ayuntamiento with selecting officials, the new decree was based on a range of direct and indirect elections. The residents of each block (*manzana*) were to elect a *Jefe de Manzana*, who in turn were to elect a *Jefe de Cuartel* in each *cuartel menor*, who were themselves to select a *Junta Superior de Policía* to supervise policing in the city. Each *Jefe de Manzana* was to select four assistants—at least three of whom had to live on the streets of the block—who were to assist in combatting crime, preventing fights, and maintaining registries of the street’s residents. Furthermore, the *Jefe de Manzana* was given the authority to carry out judicial proceedings for minor offenses punishable by small fines or a few days in jail. Although the regulation did not stipulate the formation of *rondas*, it did give officials broad authority to involve residents in the maintenance of order, establishing that all residents were obliged “to take part in [...] whatever measures they [e.g., officials] order for their service

⁴⁵ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 6, Exp. 48: Decree of 4 February 1834.

⁴⁶ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 15, Exp. 105: Decree of 30 December 1846.

that is designated.”⁴⁷ Despite their differences, all regulations shared a common emphasis on making residents responsible for their own policing.

City authorities had many reasons to make such extensive use of residential policing. It built off of existing precedent, and it was extremely cheap as neither residential officials nor ronda members were paid, which was undoubtedly attractive to the perpetually cash-strapped post-independence city and federal governments.⁴⁸ But beyond these reasons, residential policing was an attractive option because it connected republican citizenship with the notions of quotidian urban governance bound up in the idea of *policía*. Similar to how militias were central to nineteenth century republicanism, making national defense the responsibility of armed citizens, residential policing acted on a smaller scale, establishing not just citizens, but vecinos—that is, reputable community figures—as key actors in the maintenance of public order and the provision of justice at the level of the neighborhood and the city block.⁴⁹ In doing so, residential policing sought to extend public authority into an (imagined) urban community maintained by proximity and hierarchies of public honorability, while turning local knowledge to public ends.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 16, Exp. 4: Decree of 11 January 1847. The decree was issued during the political turmoil of the US-Mexico War, albeit several months before the US occupation of Mexico City.

⁴⁸ Nacif Mina emphasizes the financial sense of residential policing. Nacif Mina, “Policía y seguridad pública,” 42.

⁴⁹ On the origins of the militia system, see: Manuel Chust, “Armed Citizens: The Civic Militia in the Origins of the Mexican National State, 1812-1827,” in *The Divine Charter: Constitutionalism and Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, ed. Jaime E. Rodríguez O. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 235–52. On the role of the militia in daily life, as well as its replacement by the National Guard in the mid-19th century, see: Schaefer, *Liberalism as Utopia*, 79–94. On challenges to the militia system, see: Escalante Gonzalbo, *Ciudadanos imaginarios*, 197–206. Of course, Mexico was hardly the only Latin American country to rely on militias; see: Sabato, *Republics of the New World*, 89-131 (Ch. 3: Citizens in Arms).

⁵⁰ Notably, residential police officials were in charge not only of dealing with crime and disorder, but also of making detailed lists of residents and businesses which were vital for city government. AHCM, Bandos, Caja 6, Exp. 48: Decree of 4 February 1834; *Ibid.*, Caja 15, Exp. 105: Decree of 30 December 1846; *Ibid.*, Caja 16, Exp. 4: Decree of 11 January 1847.

Officials often stressed the necessity of residential policing in opposition to professional policing; if the latter was seen as ineffective and prone to abuses, authorities regularly argued that residential participation in public order was necessary both for efficacy and to prevent abuses. While justifying the early 1847 residential policing decree, the governor claimed that the city's existing police forces were too widely scattered to effectively look over every point in "such a populous city" as the capital; at best, they "only can serve as auxiliaries, without being enough to impede crimes," while at worst, they were poorly disciplined and violent. The security of all citizens could only be attained, he argued, "with the mutual care of those same citizens, combining their interests with those of the public," as "nobody can care for a house better than its owner."⁵¹ In 1848, officials were even more forthright. While the "misery" of the municipal treasury prevented them from forming an effective professional police force, they further argued "that a mercenary force could create interests contrary to those of the same residents who are charged" taxes to support it, or it could be easily used "to obtain ends different from those it was created for" (implying concerns about the police being used for political repression).⁵² Instead, they wrote, "the city is the mansion" of not only officials and elites, but of "many other persons" as well. As "nobody is more interested nor worthier than the same residents, in attending to their own security, and in taking part in the exercise of municipal authority for the conservation of an order and security that are threatened by circumstances," officials wrote, they established the

⁵¹ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 16, Exp. 4: Decree of 11 January 1847.

⁵² AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3690, Exp. 100: Decree of 20 May 1848. On fears of a politically repressive police (seen as the French model), see: Pulido Esteva, "Policía," 1611–12, *passim*.

residentially-based Compañías Urbanas de Conservación, relying on the “patriotism” and “good judgement of all the inhabitants of their municipality.”⁵³

Beyond just the maintenance of public order, residential policing connected policing to the provision of justice, giving the latter weight at the local level and rendering the judicial system an accessible resource. Early on, the role of police officials in justice was somewhat ambivalent, stressing prevention of crime and disorder through personal intermediation—breaking up fights and resolving disputes—rather than through the courts, in a continuation of the duties of the colonial-era *Alcalde de Barrio*.⁵⁴ At the same time, other minor cases were decided by *jueces menores*, lower-level judges who were elected by neighborhood residents, while accused *vagos* were (in 1828-1846) instead brought before a special Tribunal de los Vagos.⁵⁵ By the mid-century, in response to continuing complaints of crime and disorder, police officials were granted greater formal authority in the judicial realm. The 1847 *Policía Preventiva* regulation established that *Jefes de Manzana* had responsibility for carrying out the preliminary investigations and examinations of witnesses in the wake of a crime. Moreover, while serious criminals and *vagos* were to be turned over to judicial authorities, *Jefes de Manzana* were to carry out legal proceedings and pass sentences in cases of minor crimes—especially fighting and small-scale theft—that were punished by fines of three pesos or less, or three days or less of arrest.⁵⁶ Such regulations were modified over the next few years. In 1848, for instance,

⁵³ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, *Policía, Seguridad*, Vol. 3690, Exp. 100: Decree of 20 May 1848. Unfortunately, the document is in poor condition, preventing a more detailed analysis of the new regulations.

⁵⁴ Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio”; Nacif Mina, “Policía y seguridad pública”; Hernández Franyuti, “La organización y el control,” 56–57.

⁵⁵ Diego Castillo Hernández, “La ley y el honor: jueces menores en la Ciudad de México, 1846-1850,” *Signos Históricos* 26 (December 2011): 79–80. On the Tribunal de los Vagos, see: Arrom, *Containing the Poor*, 29; Warren, “Mass Mobilization versus Social Control.”

⁵⁶ AHCM, *Bandos*, Caja 16, Exp. 4: Decree of 11 January 1847.

complaining of “scandalous disorder” that he blamed on excessively long court proceedings and lack of judicial officials to try cases, President José Joaquín de Herrera decreed that even more serious crimes—such as theft, assault, and murder—were to be tried verbally by a plethora of new Alcaldes (at least two per city block) who were to be elected by residents of each block.⁵⁷ In general, residential police officials and locally-elected judges had authority to pass judgement in the minor cases that made up the vast majority of arrests, and some more serious crimes, until reforms in 1853 made this the exclusive responsibility of the federal judiciary.⁵⁸

In practice, the criminal justice system (at least for minor crimes) was largely based on publicly recognized honorability, in which residential police officials played a key role. As the pathbreaking work of Vanesa E. Teitelbaum, Diego Castillo Hernández, and Graciela Flores has shown, residential police officials (and other low-level judges) largely lacked legal training and resources for substantial criminal investigation. Instead, they in part decided their verdicts on the basis of suspects’ and victims’ ability to credibly claim conformity with notions of honor and good citizenship—which in practice, usually came down to their ability to call upon networks of patrons, neighbors, family, and coworkers to testify in their favor.⁵⁹ Residential police officials, as honorable citizens imbued with public authority and in possession of local knowledge, were often crucial witnesses in such cases. Indeed, they were required by law to attest to the honorability (or lack thereof) of any residents of their demarcation who were

⁵⁷ Manuel Dublán and José María Lozano, eds., *Legislación mexicana, ó, Colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la República* (México: Impr. de E. Dublán, 1876), Vol. 5, No. 3083, 401-406: Law of 6 July 1848 "Sobre el modo de juzgar a los ladrones, homicidas y heridores".

⁵⁸ Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio”; Castillo Hernández, “La ley y el honor”; Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización*, 34–44.

⁵⁹ Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización*, pt. 1; Castillo Hernández, “La ley y el honor”; Flores Flores, *La ciudad judicial*; Flores Flores, *La justicia criminal ordinaria*.

accused of *vagancia*, although they regularly testified in other cases, as well.⁶⁰ In a typical case from 1851 in Tacubaya, two men were brought before the local Alcalde, having been accused—quite vaguely—of being “suspicious.” Although one was soon afterward accused of beating his wife, both men were freed quickly when local police officials testified that they were honorable, hard workers, and had no history of bad conduct.⁶¹ Such practices further enmeshed residential police officials into a web of social relations with their neighbors. At the same time, they gave space for city residents to defend themselves in court, to a degree mitigating against the wide range of reasons for which they would be arrested.

Residential policing’s connection to varying notions of republican citizenship is most obvious in the regulations on who could serve as police officials or in the *rondas*. In general, residential police officials were required to be male citizen-residents with noted honorability, while *ronda* members were almost invariably simply required to be adult male residents.⁶² However, while these broad categories remained a constant point of agreement between different actors, the specifics—especially the requirements for police officials—varied from decree to decree, highlighting disagreements over the bounds of citizenship and the ability to play a formal role in politics and the shaping of society. Notably, income requirements ranged from exceptionally high to nonexistent.⁶³ At the same time, many regulations also highlighted the

⁶⁰ Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización*, 68, 73–74.

⁶¹ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Justicia y Juzgados, Caja 223, Exp. 3: Antonio Alemán y Pedro Cervantes por sospechosos, 1851. The former was described as “honrado” and as having notable “honradez,” while the latter was called a “hombre de bien.”

⁶² Participation in the *ronda* was consistently quite broad. The 1834 regulations required that male residents of each block participate, while the late 1846 decree made *ronda* service a requirement for all male citizens (broadly defined) except for those with physical impediments and members of the military or clergy. Similarly, the 1847 regulations only required that *ronda* members be (male) *vecinos*. AHCM, Bandos, Caja 6, Exp. 48: Decree of 4 February 1834; AHCM, Bandos, Caja 15, Exp. 105: Decree of 30 December 1846; AHCM, Bandos, Caja 16, Exp. 4: Decree of 11 January 1847.

⁶³ On income requirements: the 1834 regulations, for example, stipulated that residential police officials were to earn their income through work that would not interfere with their police duties, essentially requiring them to

importance of patriarchal authority over the family in granting access to authority in residential policing: the 1834 regulation, for example, provided for arming male heads of households to maintain public order, while the 1845 municipal ordinances established lower age requirements for married men—twenty years old, compared to twenty-five for single men—in order to be eligible to be a residential police official.⁶⁴ Given the broad criteria, a relatively wide range of residents served as residential police officials, although much data is lacking on who was named.⁶⁵ Many residential police were artisans.⁶⁶ Although the end of the colonial-era guilds and the ongoing economic recession meant that artisans' position declined in the nineteenth century, many were nonetheless able to lay claim to respectability through their skilled productive labor and control over dependents (both family members and apprentices).⁶⁷ Comerciantes, who could

belong to the wealthy rentier class. The 1845 municipal ordinances, in contrast, stated that residential officials needed “to possess physical or moral capital that provides them with enough to live off of, and to be of notable honorability.” The 1846 municipal ordinances were significantly broader: likely due to the pressing need to maintain order during a period of war, police officials were only required to be “people who, by their probity and patriotism, inspire the confidence of their neighbors.” The early 1847 regulations that soon replaced them included strict requirements for the city-wide supervisory Junta Superior de Policía (members had to be male citizens, at least thirty years old, and with a high income of at least 3,000 pesos per year), but was more open for Jefes de Manzana, who were only to be male citizens, residents of the block they policed, and over twenty-five years of age. AHCM, Bandos, Caja 6, Exp. 48: Decree of 4 February 1834; *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. I, 201-211: Law of 28 April 1845, 209; AHCM, Bandos, Caja 15, Exp. 105: Decree of 30 December 1846; AHCM, Bandos, Caja 16, Exp. 4: Decree of 11 January 1847.

⁶⁴ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 6, Exp. 48: Decree of 4 February 1834; *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. I, 201-211: Law of 28 April 1845, 209. Timo Schaefer has also noted “the reliance of the Mexican state on the family as an instrument of social control”. Schaefer, *Liberalism as Utopia*, 64.

⁶⁵ Most documents naming people to such posts did not bother to discuss their specific qualifications. As publicly-recognized honor was so central to residential policing, it stands to reason that most of those named were already known to city authorities. As a result, the most useful sources for understanding police personnel are their letters of renunciation, in which they often discussed their circumstances to justify leaving the post; however, this of course leads to a relatively limited sample. For one example of the naming of residential police authorities from Tacubaya, see: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 15, Exp. 1: 7 January 1887, Relativo al nombramiento de auxiliaries para los barrios de la ciudad y Municipio.

Timo Schaefer has argued that the Civic Militia—the equivalent of residential policing beyond the Federal District—was largely composed of the “middle sectors of provincial society,” which regularly included people who worked as day laborers or salaried workers (as many did temporarily or sporadically, as occupations were often not particularly stable). Schaefer, 83.

⁶⁶ Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio,” para. 28.

⁶⁷ On artisans, see: Sonia Pérez Toledo, *Los hijos del trabajo: los artesanos de la ciudad de México, 1780-1853* (México: El Colegio de México, 1996); Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización*.

claim respectability through their ownership of their businesses, also served.⁶⁸ In some cases, even day laborers were named as residential police officials—although whether they were selected for their known honorability (through labor and family) or as representatives of more powerful patrons is unclear.⁶⁹ Such instances may have been exceptional—as Diego Pulido Esteva has noted, at times authorities named outsiders to residential police positions in poorer areas of the city, as they distrusted local residents—but they do highlight that residential police service was at least potentially relatively open.⁷⁰ Overall, the differences in regulations highlight tensions over how expansive citizenship and membership in the polity—and with it, the ability and duty to police public space—was to be. Yet they also suggest broadly shared elements in understandings of citizenship—namely, the weight given to masculine honor, as well as rootedness in a place—as well as their perceived role in legitimizing the exercise of public order. Residential policing formed a more or less coherent vision, to some degree carried out in practice, of making the quotidian maintenance of public order a local concern driven by the participation of a wide variety of citizens and residents, mediated by norms of masculine honor.

Another view of residential policing emerges from considering arrest patterns, which highlight how residential police acted differently than other police. A sample of daily arrest reports from 1831 show that policing was divided between residential *rondas*, the military, and the municipal *sereno* streetlight guards (Table 1.1).⁷¹ There were substantive differences in how

⁶⁸ For example, one comerciante turned down being named residential police official in Tacubaya in 1869, stating that he had business in Mexico City and was attending the “Escuela Especial de Comercio” there. AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 11, Exp. 5: Communication of 13 January 1869, Teodoro Sandoval to Ayuntamiento President.

⁶⁹ See, for instance: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 11, Exp. 5: Communication of 3 April 1869, Agustín Guillen to Ayuntamiento President.

⁷⁰ Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio,” para. 28.

⁷¹ The 1831 sample is based on 28 daily arrest reports, which were published in the *Registro Oficial del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*. The arrest reports specifically cover: October 21-23, and 25-27; November 4-13, 15-16, 21-22, and 24-30, and were published semi-regularly in editions of the *Registro* from 26

they operated. Residential *rondas* were the most important police force in the city, arresting as many people as the military and the *serenos* combined, but in the aggregate they did so for different reasons. The *serenos* may have made the most arrests for drunkenness and disorderly conduct, but they made few arrests for any other reason. In contrast, while the *rondas* still arrested many for drunkenness, they were more focused on combatting violence and other crime: over half of the arrests that they made were for fighting and assault, while they also made the most arrests for theft. Military patrols made few arrests for public order offenses, but, compared to other forces, were much more often sent to carry out arrests on behalf of judicial authorities. Intriguingly, gambling was ignored by the *rondas* and *guardafaroleros*, while military patrols targeted it only during anti-gambling sweeps; of the 29 men accused of gambling, 20 were arrested in one single night, while the other nine were arrested just four nights later.⁷² The *rondas* also appear to have been more likely than other police to arrest people on the request of their spouses, serving to either reinforce patriarchal authority over female dependents, or to punish men who violated norms of marital relations.⁷³ As the three police forces appear to have

October-5 December, 1831. It must be noted that two separate reports with markedly different data were published, on different days, for 16 November 1831 (one on 20 November 1831, and one on 22 November 1831). The reason for this is unclear, but it seems clear that the two reports are not actually summarizing the same night; I have therefore treated the date discrepancy as an error in the newspaper.

It must be noted that these records have several major limitations. Besides being chronologically incomplete (missing several days from each month), they only provide the information given in the table. They do not discuss, for example, the occupation of those arrested, their age, their marital status, their place of birth, literacy, or any other data that would allow for a more complete profile of those arrested. Many important questions cannot be answered from this data. It is unclear whether the police disproportionately arrested recent migrants to Mexico City, for instance, or if there were significant differences in rates or types of arrest between married and unmarried women and men. The majority of those arrested would have belonged to the lower and working classes, as was the case in the late colonial era and Porfiriato; see Teresa Lozano Armendarés, *La criminalidad en la ciudad de México, 1800-1821* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1987); Piccato, *City of Suspects*.

⁷² Ibid., 28 November 1831, and 3 December 1831.

⁷³ Timo Schaefer has noted that such arrests were carried out with relative frequency in small towns in the countryside: Schaefer, *Liberalism as Utopia*, 30.

patrolled substantially overlapping areas, it is likely that their differences in arrest patterns largely reflect different strategies and preferences.

Reason for Arrest	Rondas (<i>Residential</i>)	Patrullas (<i>Military</i>)	Alumbrado (Serenos) (<i>Professional</i>)	Total (Percentage)
Drunkenness / Disorderly Conduct	41	6	78	125 (31.25%)
Fighting	52	20	0	72 (18.00%)
Injuries (caused or received)	58	10	2	70 (17.50%)
Theft	22	9	3	34 (8.50%)
Gambling	0	29	0	29 (7.25%)
By Order of Authorities	7	20	0	27 (6.75%)
Illegal Carrying of Arms	8	1	0	9 (2.25%)
Family Violence / Request of Spouse	5	2	0	7 (1.75%)
Offenses to Officials / Guards	1	1	1	3 (0.75%)
Suspicion	0	0	2	2 (0.50%)
Conflict Between Master and Servant	1	0	1	2 (0.50%)
Other (including Desertion and Fraud)	6	3	11	20 (5.00%)
Total Arrests	201 (50.25%)	101 (25.25%)	98 (24.50%)	400

Table 1.1: Arrests, Late 1831.

SOURCE: Sample of 28 days, Late October-November 1831, published in *Registro Oficial del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*.

These records suggest the ambivalent position occupied by residential policing. Designed to make order the responsibility of citizen-residents, connecting new ways of belonging to the polity with the demands of order, residential policing gave residents a great deal of discretion to shape how they reacted to perceived threats to order. Drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and gambling received less attention from residential police than did more violent offenses. At the same time, residential police were by far the most repressive police institution in the city if

measured by number of arrests, and played a substantial role (if still lesser than professional police) in cracking down on popular practices such as drinking. They were also at the forefront of efforts to use police force to reinforce norms of patriarchal authority, highlighting the contradictions of citizenship and equality in the new republic.

At the same time, residential policing afforded city residents a potent resource beyond just arrest power, allowing them to legitimate broader, at times controversial, claims to shape public order and urban governance. For example, in late June of 1848, shortly after the end of the U.S. military occupation of Mexico City, twenty-six residents of the 127th Manzana—located just northeast of the central Plaza Mayor—petitioned the city council.⁷⁴ Presenting themselves as good *vecinos*, “desirous of conserving order” and defending the security of their persons and goods in a period of disorder and fear of crime, they emphasized their enthusiastic participation in residential policing and claimed that their block organized its *ronda* well before their more laggardly neighbors. Their patrol efforts “were sufficient to contain in part the repeated abuses and harms by wrongdoers.” However, they claimed, their *ronda*’s hard work had ultimately been in vain: theft continued unabated, their *Jefe de Manzana* had nearly been murdered, and criminals hid in their district so frequently and flagrantly that the press had begun to take notice. The petitioners blamed this in part on the courts, which they claimed regularly released suspected criminals the *ronda* had arrested. But they also blamed the lack of effective vigilance by professional police: despite their district’s central location, “Never is seen a patrol in this part of the city, never is seen a soldier of the police; it appears that it does not belong to the capital.” However, their specific demands were relatively minor in scope: they requested that patrols be

⁷⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the following discussion is based on: AHCM, Ayuntamiento y Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía en General, Vol. 3632, Exp. 355: Petition of 30 June 1848 (and multiple documents in the same expediente in response through late July).

sent through their neighborhood on festival days, and requested that officials close three nearby pulquerías that they claimed were centers of crime. City authorities immediately complied with the latter request, sparking an immediate response from the pulquería owners, who complained of unfair treatment and petitioned the Ayuntamiento for redress. The petitioners' strategy highlights how capitalinos could use ronda service to bolster their demands in other areas, like pulquería closures, that were beyond the authority of the rondas themselves.

At the same time, the petition and its aftermath also complicates notions of a smooth integration between *rondas*, local officials, and justice otherwise implied in the residential policing project. Besides highlighting residents' frustrations with the judicial system, it also suggests that the *ronda*, and residential policing, more broadly, could serve as a tool of intra-neighborhood conflict. In doing so, residential policing exposed tensions between residents—in this case, between a relatively small group of twenty-six men and the owners of local pulquerías—over public spaces, practices, and their regulation.⁷⁵ Notably, not only the petitioners made recourse to policing: besides themselves complaining to the Ayuntamiento for redress, one of the pulquería owners also called for the local *Jefe de Manzana* to visit their establishment to prove that they were complying with regulations. Ultimately, residential policing was enmeshed within neighborhood social dynamics and networks. While this in theory was to generate local knowledge and make it useful for the broader aims of city governance, in practice police power also served as a tool to be fought over.

Ultimately, residential policing presented itself as a means of connecting citizenship with public order. It did so by theoretically making order in large part a local concern, rooted in the

⁷⁵ Little information about the petitioners themselves can be gleaned from the file. Notably, all the ronda members were literate (or at least literate enough to sign their names), suggesting a relatively higher access to resources than the average city resident.

city's blocks and larger administrative divisions, and based on traditional conceptions of *policía* that linked the suppression of crime to broader aspects of urban governance. However, residential policing was hardly the only way of organizing public order and crime control. It overlapped with, and competed with, the military and a host of professional police corps. It also generated significant challenges and criticism from authorities, the press, and residents themselves. Indeed, whether policing was to be the responsibility primarily of local residents or of a professional corps was the subject of debate and contention, touching on a wide range of questions ranging from the effectiveness of different models, to the role of citizenship in giving a stake in the ordering of the city, to the potential for abuse of authority. Ultimately, these challenges would conclude with the gradual replacement of residential policing by professional policing, despite the serious concerns raised over the latter.

The Decline of Residential Policing

In January of 1848, the city council's police commission harshly criticized earlier police organizations—implicitly both professional and residential forces—writing:

“[T]he commission has reflected at length on what has been called ‘police’ for the past years, and it has not found anything on the topic to indicate, in its opinion, that it deserves such a name, as there has not been a system of vigilance, nor morality among its employees, or better said there have not been employees; a public functionary that had at his disposition a brutal force with which to pursue wrongdoers after the perpetration of a crime or misdemeanor is all that it has found, even though it is well-known that the principal object of good policing is such active vigilance that it prevents the perpetration of crimes.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, *Policía, Seguridad*, Vol. 3691, Exp. 111: Decree of 2 January 1848.

The commission's conclusions were widely shared, and would have sounded familiar to observers from years past and decades in the future.⁷⁷ The police, whether they were organized residentially or professionally, were regularly criticized for failing to uphold legal guarantees and for failing to prevent crime. If in the 1820s, criticisms of police abuses had led to the disbandment of professional forces (except the *guardafaroleros* and *celadores*), officials soon expressed concern that residential policing was in itself no guarantee against abuses, and could cause as many problems as it sought to solve.⁷⁸ Indeed, as the dominant form of organizing order and justice in the early decades after independence, residential policing regularly faced criticism from an array of actors, from officials to city residents. Meanwhile, residents themselves displayed a profound ambivalence about residential policing. These challenges and difficulties eventually legitimized residential policing's decline and replacement with centralized, professional policing.

To an extent, debates over residential policing emerged from conflicts over centralism and municipal autonomy, yet they were not reducible to such disputes. As José Antonio Serrano Ortega has shown, tensions in the post-independence decades between the Ayuntamiento and the Federal District governor (part of the centralist conservative national government) led in 1840 to the suppression of the Ayuntamiento's residential police and their replacement with Federal District-controlled professional police.⁷⁹ But it was not inevitable that centrally-organized policing would be professional policing. As Graciela Flores Flores has noted, the 1841 devaluation of copper currency impeded the centralist government's ability to pay professional police, leading centralist authorities to set up their own (unpaid) residential police system in that

⁷⁷ For a later example, see: Manuel G. Prieto, "El 1o de julio," *El Foro*, 12, 16, and 24 July 1879.

⁷⁸ Pulido Esteva, "Policía," 1618–22; Nacif Mina, "Policía y seguridad pública," 37–44.

⁷⁹ Serrano Ortega, "Los virreyes del barrio."

year.⁸⁰ Moreover, the late 1840s witnessed a major resurgence in residential policing (under the auspices of the Ayuntamiento), spurred by the political instability and worsening material conditions of the U.S.-Mexico War (1846-1848), including the occupation of Mexico City and the brief popular uprising against both U.S. troops and the collaborationist political elite.⁸¹ As has been discussed, authorities' efforts to maintain order led to a plethora of both residential and professional police decrees and regulations, and an expansion in judicial authority granted to residential police officials, with residential police authority reaching a peak in the late 1840s and early 1850s.⁸² Yet this resurgence was not unquestioned.

From the very start, residential policing had been controversial for myriad reasons. For example, the Governor of the Federal District claimed, in a decree from early 1834, that residential participation in finding criminals, preventing crime, and identifying *vagos* would prevent “the inconveniences of a sinister police force that so many would flee from,” making the typical argument that residential policing would prevent the abuses associated with professional police.⁸³ But barely a week later, the governor was forced by the city council to issue significant modifications. Most importantly, residential police officials were now barred from rooting out *vagos* and “suspicious people” (*sospechosos*) on their own, instead being limited to only informing city councilmen of “the news about *vagos* and suspicious people that are given to

⁸⁰ Flores Flores, *La ciudad judicial*, 91–92. Diego Pulido Esteva has also argued against Serrano Ortega's interpretation. Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio,” para. 14.

⁸¹ On the resurgence of residential policing as a result of the war, see: Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio,” para. 15. On the occupation of Mexico City and the resulting uprising, see: Luis Fernando Granados, *Sueñan las piedras: alzamiento ocurrido en la ciudad de México, 14, 15 y 16 de septiembre de 1847* (México: Ediciones Era, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2003). For invitations by city authorities to join the police in the wake of the uprising, see: AHCM, Bandos, Caja 17, Exp. 5: Bando of 17 September 1847; *Ibid.*, Caja 16, Exp. 6: Bando of 18 September 1847.

⁸² Diego Pulido Esteva points to the 1853 replacement of Jefes de Manzana with Jueces de Paz as a crucial moment in the decline of residential policing, reversing the earlier expansion of residential police authorities' judicial functions. Pulido Esteva, “Después del alcalde de barrio,” paras. 17–18.

⁸³ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 6, Exp. 48: Decree of 4 February 1834.

them by citizen heads of family or of household, without making dark investigations, unbecoming of the police of a free people.”⁸⁴ As the modified regulation suggests, giving residents direct authority over policing and full investigative powers, especially in such indefinite categories as *vago* and *sospechoso*, was seen as threatening citizens’ rights.

Furthermore, the modifications to the 1834 regulation highlight one of the other obstacles to residential policing: the challenge of enforcing participation. The modified decree established a series of fines for residents who refused to participate in the *rondas*, turned down their appointment as police officials, or failed to assist authorities in combatting disorder and maintaining population registers. Importantly, the governor also promised that the patrols “will only continue for the time that is necessary, the District Government committing to establishing new taxes to put an end to this burden that is imposed on the inhabitants of Mexico for their own utility.”⁸⁵ The governor’s efforts to ensure compliance with the decree and to assure residents that the measure was only temporary suggests that residential policing met with a less than enthusiastic response from the city’s residents—a conclusion that is backed up by a host of other sources throughout the century. Other residential police regulations similarly established punishments for failure to participate, and arrests for such offenses were not uncommon.⁸⁶ Capitalinos who were named to residential police positions not infrequently turned down their nominations—not entirely unsurprisingly, given the intensive nightly labor was unpaid.⁸⁷ One

⁸⁴ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 6, Exp. 51: Decree of 12 February 1834.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ On fines for failure to participate, see, for example: AHCM, Bandos, Caja 15, Exp. 105: Decree of 30 December 1846.

On arrests: in Tacubaya in February of 1852, for instance, José María López was sentenced to two days in jail “for not having wanted to go on the *ronda*.” AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 369, Exp. 15.

⁸⁷ For examples of renunciations (and nominations) from Tacubaya, see: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 11, Exp. 5: Communications of 13 January-28 May 1869; Ibid., Caja 11, Exp. 22: Communications of 24-27 January 1870. Police officials renounced their nominations on the basis of poor health, familial necessities, and conflicts with their occupation.

appointed official wrote to the Tacubaya municipal government to complain that, while his initial renunciation of his position had not been accepted, after three months on the job he was unable to continue. “Being a poor laborer,” he wrote, “I need to work daily to earn my daily wage, and it is not possible for me to carry out a commission that demands my daily presence in the town; so, I have to miss [compliance with either] my duty to authority, or the more imperative duty of working for my subsistence.”⁸⁸ Given that capitalinos continued to organize on an ad hoc basis outside the *ronda* system to pursue and arrest perceived wrongdoers, residents may have felt that the *ronda* was a superfluous imposition on their time.⁸⁹ Although residential policing offered capitalinos access to resources, the burdens imposed by the system limited its appeal, and authorities’ repeated efforts to ensure participation suggest that many regulations were not fully followed. Communications from 1847 and 1848, when authorities sought to set up residential patrols to maintain order during the war with the United States, regularly complained that rondas were not set up despite repeated decrees, and the Tacubaya municipal president griped that his municipalities’ population was “so backward that it is impossible to oblige them to patrol.”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 11, Exp. 5: Communication of 3 April 1869, Agustín Guillen to Ayuntamiento President. “[...] porque siendo un pobre labrador, necesito trabajar diariamente para adquirir mi jornal, y no me es posible desempeñar una comisión que exige mi presencia diaria en el Pueblo; pues o faltaría a mis deberes de autoridad, o a los más imperiosos de trabajar para mi subsistencia.”

The other two police officials who renounced their positions did not discuss their occupation, instead emphasizing either family responsibilities (Communication of 17 January 1869, Jesús de D. Sánchez) or their poor health (Communication of 28 May 1869, Andrés Lozano).

⁸⁹ On the night of 9 July 1831, for instance, a military patrol reported hearing shots fired near Santa Ana on the north side of the city. Upon arriving to investigate, they found “a meeting of people who had come in pursuit of a few men, who they were told, had tried to attack a house.” “Policía,” *Registro Oficial del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, 13 July 1831.

Smaller-scale interventions, especially when family ties were involved, were also common. In Tacubaya in early September of 1849, for instance, a group of three men attacked José Fernando Gonzalez after he beat his wife—a relative of one of the men—in public. AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Justicia y Juzgados, Caja 222, Exp. 36: Diligencia practicada contra Francisco Herrera por haber herido a Fernando Gonzalez, 1849.

⁹⁰ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3690, Exp 90: Communication of 11 October 1847. His proposed solution was to devolve back to the municipality its Alcabala revenues, ostensibly in order to fund a professional police force, highlighting how the organization of policing impinged upon broader debates about municipal autonomy.

Residential policing was hardly unique in this regard; in 1850, as they had in 1848, officials complained that neither residential nor professional police organizations had succeeded in taking root, writing that, “Disgracefully in this city almost all the dispositions for police that have been dictated in diverse times have fallen into disuse and public disdain.”⁹¹ Yet this failure to maintain widespread compliance was particularly damaging to residential policing, given its basis in broad participation.

Criticism of residential policing and justice coalesced in the late 1840s and early 1850s, centering especially on the argument that it provided no effective guarantee of rights and protection from abuses. As Vanesa Teitelbaum has pointed out, such critiques (especially when they were made in the highly politicized press) were often used as tools in political conflicts—to a degree, they reflected conservative opposition to the moderate liberal governments then in power.⁹² However, this does not mean that complaints about policing were mere reflections of partisanship; instead, they drew on, and helped construct, a repertoire of arguments and images against residential policing that had a broader resonance. In 1851, the conservative paper *El Universal* harshly criticized the involvement of Alcaldes de Cuartel in judicial processes, alleging that they regularly committed unlawful searches and arrests. It argued that such arbitrary behavior not only threatened the rights of citizens, but also led to the law losing prestige in the eyes of the population, leading to worsening crime.⁹³ But not all criticism came from

For other complaints, from before, during, and after the U.S. military occupation of the city, see: AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3690, Exp. 93: Communication of 30 April 1847; Ibid., Vol. 3690, Exp. 100: Communication of 23 September 1847; Ibid., Vol. 3691, Exp. 120: Communication of 24 November 1848.

⁹¹ Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 5, No. 3451, 701-708: Bando de Policía, 6 May 1850.

⁹² Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización*, 39.

⁹³ “La estinción de los alcaldes de cuartel es para México una imperiosa necesidad,” *El Universal*, 15 March 1851, 3. The article is discussed in Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización*, 38-39.

conservative papers: the moderate liberal periodical *El Siglo XIX* made similar arguments about the corruption and ineffectiveness of the judicial system in the same era.⁹⁴ In November of 1849, six Jefes de Manzana wrote to the Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs in a letter that was published in *El Siglo XIX*. They charged various judicial, prison, and police officials with failing to follow proper procedure, leading to the release of criminals. Moreover, they claimed that some corrupt police “every day sent to jail unhappy passersby, to make it seem like they are doing something.” They therefore called for “[t]he exaltation of the good [police]; the extinction of the negligent and dangerous.”⁹⁵ Although they framed the problem as an individual rather than systemic ill, their letter undoubtedly reflected and lent strength to broader critiques of residential policing.

Not all such complaints were made in the press, either; charges of malfeasance from authorities and residents also gave weight to critiques of residential policing, even if they did not explicitly propose institutional changes. In 1848, thirteen residents of the city’s 159th block petitioned the Ayuntamiento. Complaining of unspecified “abuses and blunders, that are repeatedly committed” by the Jefe de Manzana, they asked for the official’s replacement with a “Citizen who is apt to carry out the job, and knows to respect the rights that Laws concede to his subordinates [apparently referring to residents themselves, not to lower police officials].”⁹⁶ And in 1851, the Supreme Court accused residential police officials in Tacubaya of committing procedural violations against suspected *vagos*, imprisoning them without putting them before the

⁹⁴ Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la movilización*, 40–41. Teitelbaum cites several critical articles from 1845, 1848, and 1850 (in *El Siglo XIX*), as well as others from the conservative paper *El Universal*.

⁹⁵ *El Siglo XIX*, 27 November 1849, 2.

⁹⁶ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3691, Exp. 124. The date of the petition (as well as any detail about the petitions themselves, other than their status as residents [*vecinos*]) is unclear, but the city council responded on 12 July 1848.

competent authorities or informing them of their right to appeal.⁹⁷ Ultimately, such complaints challenged traditional arguments in favor of residential policing, framing it as no guarantee of legal order.

Professional police forces continued to come in for their share of criticism, as well, much as they had in previous years. However, the response to these critiques, when they generated a response, tended towards minor reforms and the removal of abusive officers, rather than a shift back toward residential policing. Professional police were regularly and credibly accused of corruption (reflecting their exceedingly low pay) as well as abuses.⁹⁸ In 1849, the city council complained to the governor's office that the Federal District's secret police corps (a small corps of plainclothes officers) "daily commit many abuses, robbing merchants, on the pretext that they have committed infractions, [such as] selling liquors after hours; entering houses in some neighborhoods to search them; mistreating agents of the police such as the auxiliaries, and at times robbing inoffensive citizens who are found in the streets." In response, the governor publicly announced that the offending officers would be replaced.⁹⁹ The answer to such problems, as well as continuing crime and disorder throughout the next decades, was invariably seen as further professionalization.

Although many (though not all) of these arguments took issue with individual police officials rather than residential policing itself, they nonetheless justified new regulations,

⁹⁷ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 10, Exp. 1bis: Communication of 25 September 1851.

⁹⁸ Regulations regularly stipulated quite low pay for professional police. For example, ordinary "soldiers" in the 1848 Guardia de Policía del Distrito Federal were to be paid 16 pesos per month. AHCM, Bandos, Caja 17, Exp. 87: Decree of 22 August 1848, Art. 34.

On corruption, see: Pulido Esteva, "Después del alcalde de barrio," para. 21.

⁹⁹ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3691, Exp. 129: Communication of 4 May 1849.

creating professional police forces and circumscribing the authority of residential police, which emerged in the years after the U.S.-Mexico War and led to the dominance of professional policing by the mid-1850s.¹⁰⁰ Early on, these institutions still operated alongside residential police—the 1848 *Cuerpo de Vigilantes de Policía*, for instance, stipulated that the 500-man professional force it created was to maintain order alongside nightly patrols by residential police officials—but they gradually gave less and less authority to residential police.¹⁰¹ This shift was justified with reference to longstanding criticisms of earlier police forces, including residential police. The decree establishing the 1850 *Guardia Diurna*, for example, emphasized that a professional police corps was the best means of ensuring “constant and effective vigilance,” lack of which was blamed for the apparent failures of all previous police organizations, and of making sure “that citizens enjoy the benefits of a regular police,” implicitly criticizing the more irregular *ronda* system.¹⁰² Importantly, this development away from residential policing and justice shifted the locus of authority away from the elected city government and ever more under the umbrella of the appointed officials of the Federal District. To an extent, this was nothing new—most earlier professional police forces had been Federal, not municipal, entities, although there were some exceptions.¹⁰³ But while these earlier institutions had been but one police force

¹⁰⁰ Besides the police organizations discussed below, these efforts included an 1848 regulation to create an enormous, 1,000-man *Guardia de Policía* under the governor’s office with responsibility for the entire Federal District. AHCM, Bandos, Vol. 86, Foja 208: Bando of 22 July 1848. The regulation was shortly modified to better specify the *Guardia*’s rural police composition and to give them authority expanding beyond the Federal District itself into Mexico State: AHCM, Bandos, Caja 17, Exp. 87: Decree of 22 August 1848.

¹⁰¹ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 17, Exp. 43: Decree of 9 May 1848. Later documents make it clear that the *rondas* continued; see: AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3691, Exp. 120: Communication of 24 November 1848.

¹⁰² Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 5, No. 3451, 701-708: Bando de Policía, 6 May 1850. The regulation still accounted for a mixed system of residential and professional police: those who were arrested were to be brought before the local Jefe de Manzana or Alcalde de Cuartel.

¹⁰³ Besides the ever-present *serenos* and *celadores*, who in any case were not envisioned as being chiefly concerned with crime, the extremely short-lived and small *Oficiales de Policía* corps from early 1848 was one of the few city council-controlled professional forces. AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía, Seguridad, Vol. 3691, Exp. 111: Decree of 2 January 1848.

among many, answering to a variety of authorities, the declining role given to residential policing meant that these new, federally-controlled forces took up a greater and greater share of responsibility for policing.

The declining role of residential policing in daily patrolling can be partly seen in arrest reports. As the records from late 1857 show, by that year residential *rondas* no longer played a significant role in policing Mexico City.¹⁰⁴ Unlike in 1831, when *rondas* had made the majority of arrests, by 1857 all arrests were made by one of three professional police forces: the *Resguardo Diurno* (a daytime professional police force), the *Serenos* streetlight guards, and the *Guardia Municipal* (the latter a small force largely tasked with guarding municipal buildings and prisoners, and which made far fewer arrests than the other forces).¹⁰⁵ The records also highlight that the police were increasingly active and repressive, as the numbers of arrests increased significantly, far outpacing whatever paltry population growth (if any) occurred in the era. If, in late 1831, all police combined arrested an average of 14.29 people per day, in late 1857 they made an average of 38.06 arrests per day. Finally, as in the 1831 records, the professional police focused largely on targeting popular public practices and behaviors (in contrast to how the *rondas* had acted in 1831): in 1857, 31.74% of arrests were for drunkenness and/or disorderly

¹⁰⁴ The 1857 sample consists of a total of 51 daily arrest summaries: 19 from October (1, 10, 13-29), 15 from November (1-3, 15-16, 19, 21-24, 26-30), and 17 from December (1-4, 6-11, 18, 20-23, 25-26). These documents are collected (alongside scattered arrest records from other months and years) in: AGN, Administración Pública Siglo XIX, Justicia, Contenedor 136, Vol. 640, Exp. 1. The same limitations that applied to the 1831 arrest records equally apply here. Broader comparisons are difficult in part due to the lack of standardization in record-keeping. For example, daily arrest reports from 1849 (contained within the same volume as the 1857 records—see, for example: *Ibid.*, Exp. 3: 18 June 1849) provide significantly less statistical information, instead giving brief descriptions of notable crimes and occurrences, in some cases without even stating how many people in total had been arrested that day, making comparisons impossible. This suggests an increasingly statistically-oriented, “scientific” view of crime and social control over time, although it must be noted that neither the 1831 nor 1857 summaries are entirely designed to facilitate broader record-keeping. They do not, for instance, list daily total numbers of arrests or similar aggregated data, instead reporting everything only by the number of men and women arrested for various crimes, divided up between the different police forces involved.

¹⁰⁵ Of the 1,941 arrests counted in the 1857 arrest records, 53.48% were arrested by the *Resguardo Diurno*, 44.10% by the *Serenos*, and only 2.42% by the *Guardia Municipal*.

conduct, 28.08% for minor fighting, and 13.24% for regulatory violations, compared with 10.72% for theft and just 3.60% for more serious injuries.¹⁰⁶ As the records suggest, the decline of residential patrolling gave greater space for an increasingly repressive professional police.

At the same time that residential rondas declined, other changes decisively ended the judicial role of residential police officials. In 1853, low-level judicial functions were taken from residential police officials and given to the newly-created Jueces Menores. The new regulation was framed in its preamble as being necessary “for the reestablishment of public order, [and] the upright administration of Justice,” thus echoing complaints that residential policing and justice threatened legal order. Importantly, the Jueces Menores who replaced local authorities were to be appointed by the federal government (based on recommendations from the Supreme Court), and, although they were to be based in the city’s cuartel divisions, they had no residential requirement.¹⁰⁷ Newspapers that had harshly criticized earlier systems of justice largely celebrated the reform: *El Siglo XIX*, for instance, praised it for having “much advanced” the fight against ineffective judicial administration “in a just and prudent manner.”¹⁰⁸ It especially lauded the reform’s separation of powers, its provisions for speedy criminal trials, its emphasis on persecuting *vagos*, and its provisions to name the new judges on the basis of the Supreme Court’s recommendations, which it felt would prevent abuses.¹⁰⁹ The reform had long-running effects. No longer would justice in most criminal cases be decided at the level of the city block,

¹⁰⁶ Differences in arrest patterns between the *Resguardo Diurno* and the *Serenos* appear to have stemmed largely from how the police organizations operated at different times: the former during the day and the latter at night.

¹⁰⁷ Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 6, No. 3740, 294-303: Decree of 17 January 1853, “Se establecen los jueces menores.”

¹⁰⁸ “Administración de Justicia,” *El Siglo XIX*, 30 January 1853, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*; “Administración de Justicia,” *El Siglo XIX*, 7 February 1853, 1. Interestingly, the later article struck a slightly more cautious tone in discussing the reform’s provisions for *vagos*, expressing concern that the regulation did not do enough to differentiate between guilt and innocence.

by elected residents or by residents chosen by an elected body, who combined policing and judicial functions; instead, it would be decided by federal appointees.

The Entrenchment of Professional Policing, c.1850-1880

By the mid-1850s, then, residential policing had precipitously declined from its previous dominance. Unlike earlier, unsuccessful efforts to replace it with professional policing, however, developments over the next few decades worked to reinforce professional policing. Despite a handful of (failed) efforts to revive residential policing, it gradually withered away in the capital, with remaining residential police officials playing an ever-diminishing role as time passed. Residential policing hung on for longer in the small towns of the outlying Federal District municipalities, but even there it was gradually replaced by professional forces. Its replacement in the late nineteenth century set up a paradigm of centralized, professionalized policing that would largely endure.

From the 1850s onward, liberal and conservative governments alike pursued police professionalization and centralization. Santa Anna's conservative government followed up police reforms in 1853 and 1854 that sought to build a militarized professional force with the creation of the Police Superintendency (*Superintendente de Policía*) in 1855.¹¹⁰ The measure subordinated all police forces in the city—both professional forces and the residential officials—to a centrally-appointed Superintendent, who was to be under the orders of the District governor and was to oversee the preservation of public order (*policía* broadly considered) and the apprehension of criminals. It also gave the governor final say in the naming of residential police

¹¹⁰ AHCM, Bandos, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Caja 21, Exp. 50: Militarized Police Regulation of 27 June 1853; Ibid., Caja 24, Exp. 90: Bando of 27 July 1854 (Militarized Policing Regulation); AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, *Policía en General*, Vol. 3633, Exp. 453: Regulation of 16 January 1855.

officials.¹¹¹ Although it is tempting to frame the Superintendency as an expression of conservative centralism, in 1861, Benito Juárez's newly victorious liberal government took a similar same step when it created the Police Inspection General (*Inspección General de Policía*), which centralized authority over the city's professional police forces in the hands of a new office of the Federal District government. Although the new regulation was generally more focused on crime than traditional *policía* concerns like public health, reflecting changing ideas about policing, it also established that *infracciones de policía*, minor offenses against public order stipulated in municipal regulations, were to be punished not by courts (or the city council) but by the Inspection General itself.¹¹² The regulation thus gave professional police officials greater authority over a wider range of offenses. Further regulations from 1862, still under the liberal administration, centralized authority over law enforcement in the rest of the Federal District in the hands of centrally-appointed Political Prefects.¹¹³ Similarly, the Imperial government that took power soon afterward embarked on its own program of police centralization and professionalization. Although their efforts were soon overturned by liberals when the latter returned to power, they introduced innovations like the Comisaría system—which established an official police station with staff in each quadrant of the city, allowing for the greater extension of centralized authority throughout the city—that would be re-implemented by liberals in the

¹¹¹ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, *Policía en General*, Vol. 3633, Exp. 453: Regulation of 16 January 1855.

¹¹² *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol I, 383-385: Decree of 7 March 1861, *Inspección de Policía*.

¹¹³ *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. I, 390-394: Decree of 25 March 1862, *Atribuciones y facultades de los prefectos políticos del Distrito Federal*.

1870s.¹¹⁴ Further regulations from liberal governments in 1872, 1878, and 1879 also ensured that police forces remained under the centralized authority of the Federal District government.¹¹⁵

Professional policing was not without its challengers. During the 1860s, the Ayuntamiento twice sought to revive residential policing—and, in the process, to regain its previous authority over policing. Its efforts, which ended in failure, highlight the growing entrenchment of centralization and professionalization as the guiding principles of policing. In 1860, at which time Mexico City was controlled by the conservative faction in the Reform War, the city council unsuccessfully proposed a return to residential policing. Arguing that the decline in the Ayuntamiento's traditional authority over *policía* was both counter to law and responsible for rising crime, the proposed reform sought to create a city council-dependent Junta de Policía in each of the city's eight cuarteles mayores, with a hierarchy of residential officials moving down in scale and scope. The existing professional police corps were to remain but were to be subordinated to the re-established residential authorities; the *ronda* system was also to be re-established. Importantly, the proposal maintained a separation between judicial functions and police officials—only judges were to pass sentences, highlighting that the conversation on residential policing had already moved on from the idea of more thoroughly connecting justice and residential authority as had been done in the late 1840s.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ For the Imperial effort at police reform, see: AHCM, Bandos, Caja 36, Exp. 62: Decree of 29 March 1864. Upon returning to power, liberal authorities ordered policing to return to the hands of the officials who had held power prior to the arrival of Imperial troops: Ibid., Caja 37, Exp. 19: Decree of 21 June 1867. On the organization of Comisarias by the liberals, see: Ibid., Caja 44, Exp. 25: Decree of 24 June 1874.

¹¹⁵ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 42, Exp. 25: Decree of 15 April 1872; Santoni, "La policía de la Ciudad de México durante el Porfiriato," 102 (on the 1878 police regulation); *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. II, 237-242: Decree of 23 June 1879, Organización de la policía urbana del Distrito Federal.

¹¹⁶ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía en General, Vol. 3633, Exp. 476.

After national authorities shot down the 1860 plan, the residential system was held up by the city council once again in 1865—during the Second Empire—as the answer to the problem of policing. “There is a unanimous complaint against the Honorable City Council for the lack of Police in the City,” began city councilman Timoteo Fernández de Jáuregui’s proposal. Lacking Ayuntamiento oversight, the city’s streets had become filthy, and the police had become abusive and violent. He blamed both problems on the police’s increasingly “military character” generated by professionalization efforts, which encouraged them to abstain from traditional aspects of *policía* (such as public hygiene) and “to make use of their arms to inflict blows, with neither reason nor justice, to the wretched people, presenting a dreadful scene of arbitrariness, of brutal force, and of despotism.” In response, drawing on the examples of cities in the Bajío region (where Jáuregui had previously been active in government and patriotic clubs), he argued for a residential police system controlled by the Ayuntamiento. Curiously, he suggested a much more limited system than previous proposals—residential officials were to exercise oversight over the professional police corps, but there were no provisions for *rondas*—due to his negative opinion of the capital’s population: “in this city,” he wrote, “as in all those that are so populous, egoism and indifference to patriotic sentiment predominates,” making it impossible to mandate full residential participation.¹¹⁷ Ultimately, this proposal, too, met with disapproval from national authorities; there would be no general resurgence of residential policing.

In contrast to Mexico City itself, residential policing continued to play a much more prominent role in the outlying municipalities of the Federal District. Under both conservative and liberal governments, limited funds and the generally stronger presence of the military and the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. 3633, Exp. 501: Proposal of 18 April 1865. Jáuregui specifically named Guanajuato, Querétaro, and León as inspiring his plan. Jáuregui had been politically active in Querétaro and likely had family ties there. See: “Querétaro,” *La Unidad Católica*, 27 May 1861, 3; “Querétaro,” *El Siglo XIX*, 30 August 1862, 3.

rural police corps weighed heavily against the formation of professional corps—although this was not for lack of trying by municipal authorities. During the Second Empire, the head of the Tacubaya municipal government complained to the district prefect that *rondas* were “insufficient” to prevent crime. Fretting that their failure to deal with criminality was eroding respect for authorities, the city council instead sought to organize what they termed “a stable rural force” to replace the *ronda*, although this measure does not seem to have been implemented. Intriguingly, it proposed a genuine innovation in policing, albeit one that likely would not have resolved problems with participation: to overcome limited funds and low residential enthusiasm, officials hoped to forcibly conscript residents into a full-time force, both ensuring manpower and generating funds from the fees paid by those who wished to avoid conscription.¹¹⁸ In 1868, after the reestablishment of liberal governance, federal officials ordered the formation of *rondas* in Tacubaya. The municipal Ayuntamiento opposed the order, arguing that it was a “notorious infraction of the Constitution,” especially its provisions against unpaid required service: as *ronda* service was “neither voluntary nor paid,” as they noted, it violated “our fundamental Code” (e.g., the liberal Constitution of 1857). Moreover, they wrote that the *ronda* was “less convenient today than ever” due to the presence of other police forces (presumably the Rurales) in Tacubaya; if a *ronda* were to be established covering the same responsibilities, “it is more than probable that it will produce a conflict between the *rondas* of residents and the cited Police.”¹¹⁹ Despite these challenges, Tacubaya’s municipal government

¹¹⁸ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 370, Exp. 14: Communication of 12 June 1865. Although the document includes few details, is plagued with confusing corrections, and apparently never received a response from the higher authorities whose backing the municipal council sought, it does suggest a more militarized model of policing.

¹¹⁹ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 10, Exp. 66: Communications of 13-17 November 1868.

did eventually set up residential patrols. *Rondas* persisted in the municipalities well into the 1870s at least (although authorities often complained that they were impossible to carry out due to lack of arms and munitions), and residents continued to be named as police officials into the 1880s at least.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, it was clear that the decisive change had already taken place in the capital. Throughout the late 1800s, the Federal District was largely policed by the Rurales and mounted detachments of the Mexico City police, and the municipalities gradually followed in creating their own professional police forces around the turn of the century.¹²¹

The gradual replacement of residential with professional policing, and the latter's entrenchment, hinged on several factors. A rising tide of criticism justified the shift, and residents' own lack of enthusiasm for participating in the *ronda* certainly played a role. But other developments also had an impact. Changes in liberalism that gradually narrowed avenues for citizens' participation in public life in favor of a stronger central state, and new conceptions of urban modernity in the late nineteenth century, all shaped the shift to professional policing.

The late nineteenth century witnessed significant changes in Mexican liberalism that bolstered political elites' increasing preference for professional policing. The initial transition from residential police to professional police was, at least in part, a reflection of the

¹²⁰ For an example dealing with the *ronda* from the neighborhood of La Piedad in Tacubaya, see: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 11, Exp. 76: Communication of 22 January 1873. On the naming of police officials in 1887, see: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 15, Exp. 1: 7 January 1887, Relativo al nombramiento de auxiliaries para los barrios de la ciudad y Municipio.

In early 1874, the municipal council of Tacubaya reported that the entire municipality had a total of twenty "reformed" rifles (presumably rechambered or refurbished old guns), five of them judged "useless," spread out across three neighborhoods for policing purposes, pointing to the small size of the *rondas* as well as the limited resources available to them. For its part, the municipal council asked that the district government provide an additional thirty rifles and twenty swords. AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 12, Exp. 22: Communications of 26 March-16 April 1874.

¹²¹ Santoni, "La policía de la Ciudad de México durante el Porfiriato," 108-9.

The Tacuba municipal council, for example created its own professional police force in 1900 due to concerns that the mounted officers of Mexico City's police force, which patrolled the area, were insufficient. AHCM, Municipalidades, Azcapotzalco, Ayuntamiento, Caja 1, Exp. 12: Communication of 11 January 1900.

contradictions of midcentury liberalism. Indeed, 1857—by which time residential policing had been largely replaced by professional policing—was also the year of the promulgation of a liberal constitution that embraced a rhetoric of popular sovereignty.¹²² However, changes within liberal ideology (as conservatism lost power after 1867) gave weight to preserving this system. From the late 1860s onward, a new strain of conservative liberalism emerged and became increasingly influential. While elites had long sought to limit political participation, blaming it for persistent political turmoil, conservative liberalism drew on modern, positivist, “scientific” views of society to justify such limits in the redoubled pursuit of order. By the late nineteenth century the Mexican national government (especially under Porfirio Díaz, 1876-1911) became strong enough to abandon earlier broad bases of social support and democratic elements of government in favor of a stronger central state, an expressed preference for professional administration over the messiness of electoral politics, and alliances with regional elites for foreign capital-driven national development.¹²³ At the same time, ideas of the city and urban modernity also changed. Drawing from the same guiding impulse behind the turn to positivistic politics, elites increasingly looked to European capitals as models for how a modern city should be, leading to a slew of efforts to import models of urban planning, architecture, and technology and to remake the old city (or at least its most visible elements in the central and wealthiest districts) as a modern capital.¹²⁴ Centralized professional European police forces increasingly

¹²² Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World*, 94.

¹²³ The most important work on the rise of conservative liberalism and “scientific” politics is: Charles Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). Mexico was hardly alone in this shift; for analyses that take an international perspective, see: Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World*, chap. 7; Tenorio Trillo, *La paz: 1876*.

¹²⁴ On the self-consciously modern and modernizing central areas of the city, and their contrast with the rest of the city, during the Porfiriato, see: Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, chap. 1. For further discussion of urban changes, see this dissertation's Introduction. Similar changes took place across Latin America, but were hardly limited to it; Americans also increasingly looked to the cities of Europe as models. Jorge E. Hardoy, “Theory and Practice of Urban Planning in Europe, 1850-1910: Its Transfer to Latin America,” in *Rethinking the Latin American*

became the models to be followed, even if Mexican police were not direct copies.¹²⁵ In this context—political centralization, increasing efforts to create a modern city, and the newly vibrant urban sphere—officials would increasingly turn to policing as a means of attempting to maintain order.¹²⁶ These changes solidified the shift away from municipally-organized residential policing in favor of a centrally-administered professional corps.

Associated with these broader developments were smaller shifts in how policing was conceived. Regulations emphasized different ways of generating police knowledge and, relatedly, profoundly different relationships between police and population. While police were to generate and make use of local knowledge, they were to avoid complicating ties to city residents. The 1872 regulation, for instance, charged officers with knowing the identities of everyone in their district (a tall order, given that each district encompassed a large area), but “without connecting themselves through friendship with them.”¹²⁷ In contrast to residential policing, where authority, effectiveness, and protection from abuses were to come from residential ties, professional policing saw a disconnected and specialized police force as the best guarantee of effectiveness and protection from abuses.¹²⁸ The increasingly technical view of policing also

City, ed. Richard M. Morse and Jorge E. Hardoy (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1992), 20–49; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), chaps. 1, 4–5.

¹²⁵ The most developed comparison between late nineteenth-century European, American, and Mexican police is in: Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 19–28, 42–45.

¹²⁶ Piccato, *City of Suspects*; Speckman Guerra, *Crimen y castigo*.

¹²⁷ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 42, Exp. 25: Regulation of 15 April 1872, Art. 55.

The Comisaría system also served to build local knowledge to a degree, although each quadrant encompassed a large number of neighborhoods. While in 1874 the city was divided between four Comisarías, this was soon seen as insufficient and the number was doubled to eight. A ninth and tenth Comisaría were added in the early 1920s. AHCM, Bandos, Caja 44, Exp. 25: Decree of 24 June 1874; Pulido Esteva, “Gendarmes, inspectores y comisarios,” 50–51.

¹²⁸ As Pedro Santoni discusses, the 1879 police force was required to be literate as well as meet certain physical conditions, with the goal of ensuring that police were physically and mentally suited to their tasks. However, as he emphasizes, these requirements were often ignored in practice. Santoni, “La policía de la Ciudad de México durante el Porfiriato,” 109–17.

manifested itself in a new focus on statistics as a tool for understanding the problem of order and criminality.¹²⁹

Moreover, if residential policing hinged on the direct participation of citizen-residents, professional policing emphasized less direct means of participation in the provision of order. Regulations especially emphasized residents' responsibilities as taxpayers, providing funds for salaried police, over their role as active agents in the ordering of the city. This was neither a sudden nor a complete shift—regulations and laws continued for decades to stipulate that residents had to give assistance to authorities when asked—but nonetheless marked a major change in thinking about the role of the citizen in policing.¹³⁰ In 1867, for instance, in an article lauding the establishment of public order, *El Monitor Republicano* celebrated on equal footing the many men serving as soldiers and police across the country, as well as the taxpayers whose financial contributions made them possible.¹³¹ Professional police were not to be entirely disconnected from the broader community: most regulations stipulated that those seeking to enlist needed to be citizens and present a letter of support from residential police authorities testifying that the would-be enlistee's neighbors had attested to his good conduct, and required

¹²⁹ The journal *El Foro*, for instance, called for patience in judging the 1879 police reform, arguing that its effects could only be seen through the large-scale collection of data on crime, arrests, and procedural violations. "Reformas," *El Foro*, 6 August 1879, pg. 3.

On criminal statistics, which began to be published in earnest in the 1880s and 1890s, see: Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 52–53, 221–22.

¹³⁰ Indeed, the first article of the 1871 Penal Code stressed that all inhabitants were obliged "to give assistance for the investigation of crimes and the persecution of criminals, when they are required to by authority or its agents." *Código Penal para el Distrito Federal y Territorio de la Baja California sobre delitos del fuero común, y para toda la República sobre delitos contra la Federación [1871]* (México: J. Aguilar Vera y Compañía, 1906), Art. 1.

¹³¹ Gabino F. Bustamante, "Seguridad Pública," *El Monitor Republicano*, 27 December 1867, 1.

Such ideas were not entirely new: the 1848 *Cuerpo de Vigilantes de Policía* regulation, for instance, stated that tax avoidance was a serious threat to governments' ability to maintain public order, and ordered residential police officials to assess taxes on local businesses to pay for the new professional police corps. AHCM, Bandos, Caja 17, Exp. 43: Decree of 9 May 1848.

that individuals of known honor guarantee the costs of equipment should the enlistee desert.¹³² However, these ties to place and population were clearly far more limited than those that had legitimated residential policing.

Finally, the police became increasingly repressive over time, as authorities increasingly sought to use them as tools to reshape the city and its inhabitants in line with their modernizing projects. Although policing in Mexico City had always been repressive, concerned from the beginning with preventing, punishing, and correcting a wide variety of offenses that were seen as disrupting public order, as has been seen earlier in comparing 1831 and 1857, the number of arrests increased from the early independence years to mid-late century at a rate that far exceeded the limited population growth. And 1857 was no fluke: despite limitations in data, it seems that police generally made more arrests per day as the nineteenth century went on.¹³³ Regulations and orders to police increasingly emphasized the use of police to instill discipline and respect for law among the lower and working classes.¹³⁴ The Imperial government argued in 1864 that years of political turmoil had led to widespread public disobedience of laws—the same argument liberal jurists would later make in favor of the 1871 Criminal Code—and sought to use the police to “accustom the city’s inhabitants to obedience and the need to comply with ones’

¹³² See, for instance: AHCM, Bandos, Caja 17, Exp. 87, Reglamento de la Guardia de Policía del Distrito Federal, 22 August 1848; Ibid., Caja 21, Exp. 50: Decree of 27 June 1853. In what perhaps reflects difficulties in enlisting enough police, the 1854 regulations dropped the requirement that neighbors testify to the enlistee’s good conduct. Ibid., Caja 24, Exp. 90: Decree of 27 July 1854. For a later example: Ibid., Caja 42, Exp. 25: Reglamento de la Policía de la ciudad de México y del Distrito Federal, 15 April 1872, Art. 48.

¹³³ By 1885, the police arrested an average of about 90 people per day. Although the city had started to grow well beyond its midcentury population (of perhaps 200,000) by then, reaching perhaps about 300,000 in 1884, it is clear that the daily arrest rate had grown at a rate that far outpaced population growth. Arrests calculated from data in: Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 224, Table 4. For the city’s population, 1870-1900, see: Fausta Gantús, “La traza del poder político y la administración de la ciudad liberal (1867-1902),” in *Historia política de la Ciudad de México (Desde su fundación hasta el año 2000)*, ed. Ariel Rodríguez Kuri (México: El Colegio de México, 2012), 354.

¹³⁴ In 1866, for instance, the Political Prefect of Tacubaya directed the municipal police to surveil day laborers and other workers to prevent them from taking part in the “San Lunes” tradition of not working on Mondays. AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Justicia y Juzgados, Caja 237, Exp. 27.

respective duties and obligations, the only means of assuring peace and the wellbeing of all.”¹³⁵

Similarly, the liberal police regulations from 1872—the most detailed to be issued prior to the 1890s—stressed the need to instill discipline.¹³⁶ The size of the police force also steadily increased, allowing greater capacity to surveil the city. While the 1850 *Guardia Diurna* provided for 129 police, and the 1872 regulation stipulated that there were to be about 240 police in total, the 1878 regulation stipulated that there were to be 500, while the 1879 Gendarmería Municipal included funding for 950 “gendarmes” (as police increasingly came to be called).¹³⁷

Unlike previous police organizations, the 1879 Gendarmería Municipal was not quickly replaced, but lasted for decades.¹³⁸ It marks something of an end point to the constant churn of police forces that marked the ordering of the city for much of the nineteenth century. However, in its organization, the Gendarmería contained relatively little in the way of innovations, instead developing on earlier patterns in policing. Although it expanded dramatically—from around 1,000 police in 1880, to over 3,000 in 1910—organization remained largely consistent over time, the main change being that, with the 1903 centralization of the Federal District, policing the

¹³⁵ AHCM, Bandos, Caja 36, Exp. 62: Decree of 29 March 1864.

¹³⁶ At times, this discipline could take an oddly paternalistic edge. The 1872 Regulation, for instance, charged police with especially preventing indigenous people from drinking, specifically in order to keep them from being robbed, “the rateros taking advantage of their drunkenness.” AHCM, Bandos, Caja 42, Exp. 25: Regulation of 15 April 1872, Art. 79.

Importantly, while the 1872 regulation was extremely lengthy and detailed, later regulations devoted much less space to laying out justifications for police and explanations of their role, presumably because the 1871 Penal Code and other written laws and Bandos had taken their place. See, for instance, the rather minimalist 1879 Police Regulation: *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. II, 237-242: Regulation of 23 June 1879, Organización de la policía urbana del Distrito Federal.

¹³⁷ These numbers should be taken with a grain of salt. It should also be noted that police were generally divided into two shifts. 1850: Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 5, No. 3451, 701-708: Bando de Policía, 6 May 1850; 1872: AHCM, Bandos, Caja 42, Exp. 25: Decree of 15 April 1872; 1878: Santoni, “La policía de la Ciudad de México durante el Porfiriato,” 104; 1879: *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. II, 237-242: Decree of 23 June 1879, Organización de la policía urbana del Distrito Federal.

¹³⁸ On the Gendarmería Municipal and its development, see: Pulido Esteva, “Gendarmes, inspectores y comisarios.”

outlying municipalities became the responsibility of the Gendarmería.¹³⁹ It was divided into three sections: a large corps of foot police (the Gendarmería de a Pie) in the city proper, a smaller corps of mounted police (the Gendarmería Montada) that mostly patrolled the outlying towns of the Federal District, and a small plainclothes investigative corps (inconsistently called the Policía Secreta, the Comisiones de Seguridad, or the Policía de Seguridad). Standard pay for foot gendarmes was a peso per day, much higher than previous police wages, although a portion was “discounted” in order to pay for equipment and disciplinary fines.¹⁴⁰ Foot police were assigned corners or patrol routes in each of the city’s *demarcaciones*, and answered to the Comisario (station chief) of their zone, on day-to-day matters. By 1890, there were eight Comisarías covering the city, with two more added in 1923 to incorporate newly-developed zones.¹⁴¹ Comisaría staff expanded over time to handle the growing bureaucratic requirements of the police force, although they remained dwarfed in number by street-level gendarmes.¹⁴² Above mid-level police officials, the Inspector General ran the police force under the Federal District Governor, although Gobernación could also issue orders and the president strongly influenced the selection of the Inspector General.¹⁴³ Although gendarmes were divided among Comisarías

¹³⁹ Rohlfs, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 77, 89–90, 100; Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada*, 72–79. The municipalities had previously been policed by a mix of Rurales, mounted police from the Gendarmería Montada, and an array of municipally-organized police, from small professional corps to residential rondas. With centralization, the Gendarmería established detachments of foot police in each town.

¹⁴⁰ Rohlfs, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 40; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 255n33. Rohlfs argues that gendarme salaries were broadly equivalent to those of working-class men (artisans, etc), or even on the high end, although Piccato questions whether that was still true after discounts were taken into account. The previous police force, the Resguardo Municipal created in 1878, paid police only 62.5 centavos per day, which itself was a raise from the wages of the older resguardo diurno and resguardo nocturno. Rohlfs, 37.

¹⁴¹ Pulido Esteva, “Gendarmes, inspectores y comisarios,” 50–51.

¹⁴² Pulido Esteva, “Trabajo, clase y prácticas policiales en las comisarías de la ciudad de México, 1870-1920.”

¹⁴³ Rohlfs, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 49–57. Rohlfs argues that, apart from getting followers (usually military officers distinguished only by their personal loyalty to Díaz) appointed as Inspector General, Díaz played little day-to-day role in the police department. In my own research into the Universidad Iberoamericana’s extensive collection of Díaz’s correspondence, relatively few letters to the president related to policing.

that, in theory, covered the entire city, in practice the majority were stationed close to the city center, leaving extensive areas relatively underpoliced.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, gendarmes, who had extensive authority to regulate public spaces and behaviors and, unlike earlier professional police, patrolled at all hours of the day and night, were for most city residents their most common point of contact with public authority.¹⁴⁵ As will be discussed in the next chapter, the Gendarmería Municipal was regularly discussed (especially by foreign observers) as an exemplary modern police force.

However, it must be recognized that the Gendarmería did not herald the complete end of residential policing. Residential police officials survived until late into the nineteenth century, albeit in significantly reduced capacity. Regulations included provisions for several ranks of residential police officials—Inspectores de Cuartel at the cuartel level, Subinspectores de Manzana for each block, and Ayudantes de Acera under them. The regulation largely tasked them with ensuring regulatory compliance, assisting with local-level *padrones* (censuses), and maintaining the cleanliness and good order of their areas, although the Ayudantes de Acera were charged, albeit vaguely, to “care very especially for public security” (alongside such jobs as ensuring that residents cleaned the sidewalks in front of their homes).¹⁴⁶ Such regulations

¹⁴⁴ Rohlfs, 82–88.

¹⁴⁵ The 1872 regulation largely remained in force until 1897 as far as establishing police duties. AHCM, Bando, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Caja 42, Exp. 25: 1872 Reglamento de la Policía de la Ciudad de México y del Distrito Federal, Art. 1. In Article 34, the regulation enjoined the Inspector General to keep in mind the immense sweep of his duties: “No olvidará que es de su deber conservar la paz pública, prevenir los crímenes, descubrir y arrestar a los criminales, refrenar los tumultos, proteger los derechos de las personas y sus propiedades, cuidar de la seguridad pública, conservar el orden en todo género de actos públicos, remover las sustancias dañosas de las calles y sitios públicos, reprimir los desórdenes de las casas públicas y vigilar las de mala fama, impedir a los vaos y mendigos que pidan en las calles, dar auxilio en los incendios, asistir, aconsejar y proteger a los extranjeros y viajeros, dar fuerza a toda ley represiva que afecte a su ramo y cuya ejecución se le confie y cumplir con las órdenes que se le comuniquen.”

¹⁴⁶ AHCM, Bando, Caja 44, Exp. 25: Regulation of 24 June 1874. Although the regulation predated the 1879 Gendarmería Municipal, several of the positions it discussed continued in use after 1879.

highlight the degree to which residential police officials were increasingly conceived of as removed from the matter of public security. In contrast, court records from 1878 to 1883 show that residential police—especially Subinspectores de Manzana and, less often, Inspectores de Cuartel—continued to play a role in public security alongside the professional police, albeit a reduced one compared to their earlier power: they only appeared in a minority of court records and in a limited capacity.¹⁴⁷ Most commonly, they sent injured people to the nearest Comisaría, either because they received word of violence or accidents from passersby, or because professional police themselves stopped by their homes after finding an injured person.¹⁴⁸ In a handful of cases, capitalinos went to residential police officials to request police intervention, or Subinspectores themselves made arrests after witnessing crimes or suspicious activity.¹⁴⁹ Although they could be ordered by Comisarios to go on patrol against criminals, this appears to have been infrequent and only done in response to perceptions of increasing crime.¹⁵⁰

Several of cases suggest that residential police officials' relations with their zones' residents tended to differ from those between professional police and those they policed. Given that their authority was premised on their access to local knowledge and their connections with

¹⁴⁷ Residential police officials were mentioned or otherwise appeared in some capacity in a little under one-fourth of the eighty-two cases in the 1879-1883 sample. However, they only gave testimony or played an active role in a smaller number of cases.

¹⁴⁸ See, for instance: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Julián Martínez (“El Chato”) and Isidro Herrera, Heridas; Ibid., 1878, Anastacio López, Herida Accidental; Ibid., 1878, Cayetano García, Lesiones y Homicidio; Ibid., 1878, Aurelio Cuenca and José Rodríguez, Heridas; Ibid. 1878, Francisco Chávez, Riña; Ibid, 1878, Andrés Cerón, Isabel Cerón, José M. Martínez, and Josefa Chavarría, Riña y Heridas; Ibid., Caja 657: 1879, Zenon Romero, Heridas.

¹⁴⁹ On police intervention at others' request: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Dominga Sánchez, Heridas; Ibid., 1878, Alberto Monterde and Agustín Avila, Riña y Heridas; Ibid., Caja 707: 1881, Mauricia Frías, Violencias Físicas. On police intervention at Subinspectores' initiative: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Filomena Flores and Ignacio Vázquez, Faltas a la Madre y Lesiones; Ibid., Caja 657: 1879, Toribio García, Heridas; Ibid., 1879, Felipe Suárez, Faltas al Subinspector.

¹⁵⁰ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Felipe Suárez, Faltas al Subinspector. Subinspector de Manzana Martiniano Rosas noted that, in response to growing complaints of petty theft from his neighbors, he had been ordered by the Comisario to patrol his demarcation at night.

local communities, it is unsurprising that suspects sometimes turned to their local residential official to testify to their honorability and good conduct.¹⁵¹ At times, residential police acted in opposition to professional police. For example, when the young shoemaker Agustín Godoy was chased onto the Zócalo in 1878 after reportedly robbing an elegant store nearby, he was arrested not only because of the accusation against him, but also because the Guarda Diurno said that he was a “known thief” and thus subject to arrest on sight. In contrast, the Inspector de Cuartel from Godoy’s home neighborhood gave a statement that he had known Godoy (and his family) for years, that he was a hard worker, and that “as Inspector del Cuartel he knows well the good and bad neighbors, and those who have some note [e.g., of criminal antecedents], and those who he pursues tirelessly to consign to the respective authority, and that Godoy has not given rise to this.”¹⁵² That same year, the shoemaker Anastasio López was mysteriously bloodied by an unknown projectile while in the patio of his vecindad in Colonia Guerrero.¹⁵³ Believing that he had been struck by a stray bullet from the shooting range next door, he got the Guardas Diurnos on the corner to accompany him to confront the range’s owner, Juan Guzmán Rosales. However, Guzmán—whose shooting school was long-standing and well-advertised, and who was wealthy enough to own several buildings in the area—insisted that the projectile could not have come from his range, claiming that its walls were too tall and insinuating that saying otherwise was an

¹⁵¹ Although only a handful of residential police officials testified in court cases from this period, their statements make it clear that they were enmeshed in local social dynamics not only through their police position, but also through their occupations. Of five Subinspectores who testified, three were comerciantes running small shops, and the other two were artisans: one a tailor and one a hatmaker.

¹⁵² TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Agustín Godoy, Robo. “[...] como Inspector del cuartel que es sabe bien los vecinos buenos o malos y los que tienen nota alguna y a los que persigue y no pierde de vista para consignarlo a la autoridad respectiva, y que Godoy no ha dado lugar a esto.”

Similarly, after being arrested as a suspect in an 1879 homicide, Gerardo Herrera stated that the local Subinspector could testify to his good conduct. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1879, Francisco Vázquez, Homicidio.

¹⁵³ All references to the case are from: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Anastasio López, Herida.

insult to the “skilled marksman” on the range that day.¹⁵⁴ Despite being a suspect, Guzmán was allowed by the police to help search the vecindad patio for the projectile (which was never found). Guzmán soon blamed two children who were throwing pebbles on the patio, ages four and five, for López’s injury. Although López insisted that the children had not been there when he was injured, the Guardas Diurnos followed Guzmán’s lead and took the children into custody for questioning (bringing them with their mothers, who had hurried back to the vecindad from their work outside after neighbors informed them of their children’s arrest). In contrast to the professional polices’ obsequiousness toward Guzmán, the Inspector de Cuartel (whose home the Guardas Diurnos had stopped by on their way to the Comisaría) instead mobilized his local knowledge on behalf of López and the other vecindad residents, blaming Guzmán and noting an earlier incident where a woman in the same vecindad had been injured by a stray bullet from the shooting range.¹⁵⁵ Cases such as these showcase how residential police officials’ deep-rooted local knowledge and neighborhood ties could lead them to diverge from professional police. At the same time, they highlight that their subordination to professional police left them with few avenues to express this beyond testifying in court and filing reports: despite the efforts of residential police, Agustín Godoy was found guilty of robbery, and Juan Guzmán Rosales faced no repercussions for running a dangerous shooting range next door to a residence.

Yet these differences between residential and professional police should not be overstated. As will be discussed in later chapters, professional police certainly formed

¹⁵⁴ In the court file, Guzmán mentioned that he owned property as a means of bolstering his credibility. By 1886, he owned at least three buildings on Calle de Soto: “Sesión del Martes 14 de Septiembre de 1886,” *El Municipio Libre*, 23 September 1886, 2. Advertisements for his shooting school were extremely numerous. For a sample, see: “Escuela de armas,” *La Iberia*, 25 February 1871, 3; “Escuela de armas,” *La Iberia*, 30 June 1872, 3; *La Patria*, 20 November 1879, 1; *La Patria*, 17 August 1880, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Oddly, nobody else in the case mentioned that a woman had previously been shot in the vecindad, although the mother of one of the children claimed that bullets regularly entered the residence from the shooting range.

interpersonal relationships with those they were assigned to police, shaping how they used police authority and discretion, and professional police could certainly be used as trusted character witnesses for some suspects. Residential police officials' ties with those around them also opened them to accusations of favoritism and corruption—just like professional police.¹⁵⁶ But if these connections between ordinary city residents and professional police were seen as incidental to professional policing (even if, as will be seen, they were in practice vital to how police operated), they were at the heart of how residential policing was understood and justified. The transition from residential to professional police dominance contributed to a reshaping—albeit an incomplete one—of the relationship between the police and the policed.

Conclusion

The transition from residential to professional policing was neither straightforward nor preordained. It depended on an array of factors—residential ambivalence toward the *ronda*, concerns over abuses, political conflict, and changing ideologies—and proceeded only fitfully. Nonetheless, by 1880, Mexican authorities could well say that they had implemented significant reforms. Policing had shifted away from the residential *rondas* and scattered watchmen of the 1830s, and was almost entirely in the hands of a centralized, professional corps, with residential officials dwindling in number and relegated to a secondary role. The new professional police force seemed better able to cover the needs of the growing city, both to surveil the lower and working classes and, ostensibly, to guarantee citizens' rights of property and person. However, in practice this tool would prove less suited and more limiting than imagined. As will be seen in the

¹⁵⁶ For example, after the carpenter Agustín Ávila was accused of attacking his landlord with a pulque jar in 1878, Ávila claimed that he had been subjected to harassment and violence by the Inspector del Cuartel, who was a close friend of the landlord. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Alberto Monterde and Agustín Ávila, *Riña y Heridas*.

following chapters, public distrust in the police continued and even worsened over the years in the face of continuing abuses, and full professionalization always seemed a long way off. What the shift to professional policing marked more than anything was the substantial closing off of other ways to conceive of and organize policing; indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, residential policing would return only briefly and in an extremely limited fashion on the capital's periphery during the Revolution. For years after independence, residential policing and justice had placed citizen-residents and the space of the neighborhood at the center of officials' projects to reform urban life in a way that was profoundly different from how professional policing conceived of the relationship between the police and the policed. The results were profoundly ambiguous; residential policing could not overcome the contradictions of citizenship and public order in the unequal new republic. However, residential policing nonetheless represented an ideal of how policing could work—one that systematically linked the exercise of police power with the exercise of citizenship—that was radically changed under the centralized, professional police systems that were firmly entrenched in Mexico City by the late nineteenth century.

Chapter 2. **A Persistent Problem: The Police in Mexico City, c.1879-1950**

From the creation of the Gendarmería Municipal in 1879 until well into the twentieth century, the history of policing in Mexico City presents a seeming contradiction. On one hand, authorities regularly embarked on institutional reforms, moralization campaigns, and technological modernizations; on the other hand, not only the complaints against the police, but also the prescriptions for how to respond to them, remained remarkably repetitive despite the passing of the years. This chapter traces reforms, their impacts, and the discourses surrounding them. It argues that, during the Porfiriato (if not earlier) understandings of the police problem came to be dominated by a liberal reformist perspective that framed policing as necessary for a modern society, as the proper means of defending citizens' rights to security, and as perfectible through modernization and professionalization. These understandings were important in shaping reforms and ultimately in legitimizing the police despite the intense and widespread criticism the institution faced, yet they proved inadequate to resolving the problems of policing. Moreover, reforms often reshaped the police in unexpected ways; most notably, police professionalization only served to entrench the very abuses that it was meant to combat.

As will be seen, the discourse of liberal police reformism flourished in part because it offered something for everyone in the face of widely acknowledged problems with policing. For members of the general public, it allowed them to lay claim to police protection as an aspect of citizenship. For critics, the imagined ideal of a fully professional, rights-defending police was a useful yardstick through which to criticize both the existing police for their inadequacies and (at times implicitly) the government. For the federal government, meanwhile, promoting reforms was a useful means of propping up governmental legitimacy by showing responsiveness to the

public and conformity with modern ideals that were imagined to reign in cities in the United States and Europe.¹ For the police themselves, professionalization was important in forming ideas of police expertise that justified their access to resources. From all corners, reforms were demanded and celebrated as a means to attain real professionalization, while their seeming failure to live up to their promises were, more pessimistically, understood as evidence of Mexico's purported backwardness, both excusing the police problem and giving ammunition to would-be reformists. The result was that liberal police reformism proved remarkably resilient despite its apparent inability to address the police problem.²

At the heart of the problem was the failure of the police to become what professional police were imagined as being: dispassionate law enforcers, respected by those they policed without forming compromising ties with them and disciplined enough to prevent the use of the

¹ The use of foreign examples as a comparison will be referenced repeatedly through the chapter. For an example comparing Mexico City with London and New York: "La policía de la capital," *El Siglo XIX*, 2 March 1889, 1. In the post-revolutionary years, Europe lost ground to the U.S. as a point of comparison; Modesto C. Rolland proposed Cleveland as an example to follow, for example. Modesto C. Rolland, *El desastre municipal en la República Mexicana* (México: Librería Cultura, 1921), 59–61. In 1940, *La Prensa* wrote that the "most advanced countries in the persecution of criminality" included the U.S., Canada, Argentina, and Brazil. "Golpe de muerte a la delincuencia de la metrópoli con la legión motorizada y el control central de la Jefatura de Policía," *La Prensa*, 7 June 1940. Other reforms from the era were said to be based on practices in New York and Chicago: "Desaparecerá la linterna gendarmérica," *El Nacional*, 8 March 1941. Even apparent complications were often assimilated to the narrative of progress. The notable scandals of Prohibition-era U.S. policing were, by the late 1930s, seen as adding relevance to the international comparison: like Mexico, the US had suffered from corrupt police and rising organized crime, and its purported success in implementing reforms made it all the more useful as a model for Mexican authorities to follow in cleaning up their own scandal-ridden police. "La lucha en contra de la delincuencia," *Excelsior*, 11 May 1939; "Loable iniciativa," *Excelsior*, 7 March 1940.

² This is not entirely unique to Mexico. Historians of policing in the United States, in comparison, have often noted that turn-of-the-century police were widely perceived as corrupt and incompetent, epitomized in the antic buffoonery of the "Keystone Cops". It was not until the postwar years or later that the U.S. police gained more stable mainstream (white) esteem, generated by increasingly favorable mass media portrayals, reforms, and the role of the police in enforcing racial order in the face of urban uprisings and political mobilizations. In contrast, the Mexican police do not seem to have ever enjoyed such legitimacy. On the United States, see: Balto, *Occupied Territory*; Anne Gray Fischer, *The Streets Belong to Us: Sex, Race, and Police Power from Segregation to Gentrification* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022). The Mexican case may also be compared with Brazil, where, as Teresa Caldeira has argued, the common perception is that the police are violent but effective (often in extrajudicial ways). Caldeira, *City of Walls*.

Pablo Yankelevich also has examined the pattern of recurrent cycles of scandal and reform around immigration, noting the degree to which practically ineffective reforms could still be politically useful. Yankelevich, *Los otros*, 147–48.

office for personal gain. Although critics, casting about for the roots of the police problem, offered many solutions, one recurrent diagnosis was that the police acted arbitrarily as a matter of course, whether through displays of favoritism or through simple self-serving abuses. If the ideal of modern policing hinged on the dispassionate, even detached, exercise of authority in accordance with law, the Mexico City police seemed far from it.

The goal of this chapter is not to simply repeat the common narrative of Mexican policing as a failure to attain modernity. Rather, it tries to show how this idea became, from quite early on, central to how people considered and framed the police problem, justifying a storm of reform efforts and institutional reorganizations (especially after the Revolution). Despite gradually turning police work into more of a profession or career, these changes did little to halt violence and corruption, and likely only rooted them further in police practices. Subsequent chapters will trace how abuses, violence, and corruption developed in large part out of the complex, ever-shifting interactions between the police and the policed. This chapter instead examines the debates around policing and the institutional changes that took place.³ It sheds light on how the persistence of the police problem gave space for myriad debates over the role of policing in public order, over who would be subject to police protection—or scrutiny—and over how abuses were to be contained and prevented. It also traces the way these debates, and the reforms they engendered, changed (or not) police work and institutions.

³ An exhaustive narrative of the institutional development of the police is beyond the scope of this chapter, in part due to source limitations and in part because this dissertation's focus is less on the internal politics of the police than on relations between the police and the wider public. Nonetheless, it presents enough about institutional development to ground subsequent chapters. Similarly, this chapter does not comprehensively track criticism of the police through the entire period, as press critiques were, for good reason, relentless and repetitive. Instead, it highlights common themes in discourse.

The chapter first discusses how debates over policing during the Porfiriato created a discourse of liberal police reform. During the era, policing became increasingly framed—by residents as well as writers—as a necessity in the modern, growing city. At the same time, regular criticism fed a series of reform proposals, which especially hinged on the idea of improving police personnel to make them into a widely respected force able to modernize the city through the enforcement of laws and regulations. In particular, the chapter discusses the failed drive to create a Police Code as a means of understanding the challenges of police reform in the era. Next, the chapter turns to the Revolution and its aftermath. Although the Revolution gave rise to more radical critiques of the police, these challenges were contained, and the concerns of liberal police reformism established in the Porfiriato continued to dominate debates and to shape reform proposals. The chapter traces the seemingly unending churn of institutional reforms, “moralization” campaigns, and technological modernization efforts and their effects in the postrevolutionary years. As it shows, technological developments impacted most police work in surprisingly limited ways, and reforms’ most important effect was to improve polices’ identification with their work and their cohesion; however, far from reducing abuses, this merely entrenched them and solidified police impunity.

The Porfiriato

Debates over policing were a regular feature of the highly politicized and highly active Porfirian press. By the late nineteenth century, population growth and relatively high literacy rates in the capital generated a more substantial market for journalism than had previously

existed.⁴ Although the government sought to censor the press with some success—criticizing officials by name, for instance, regularly led to legal repression—topics like policing and public security were widely debated, and could serve as avenues for criticizing the government.⁵

Unsurprisingly, debates on policing tended to follow political lines, albeit with room for maneuver.⁶ Pro-government reporting could be found in a wide range of newspapers. Some were closely tied to specific institutions, like *El Municipio Libre*, which was devoted to discussing city government, while others were associated with key government allies. *El Siglo XIX*, for instance, for some time was co-edited by the prominent científico writer and politician Francisco Bulnes (although it shifted to a more critical position after his departure), while *La Convención Radical Obrera* regularly supported Díaz in its position as the mouthpiece of a workers' mutualist organization.⁷ *El Imparcial*, Mexico's first mass daily, was heavily subsidized by the government from its founding in 1896 and tended to uncritically support the regime. Critical views also came from varied perspectives. Encouraged by the Porfirian détente between church and state, Catholic papers like *La Voz de México* presented a generally middle-class view that at

⁴ Pablo Piccato, "Notes for a History of the Press in Mexico," in *Journalism, Satire, and Censorship in Mexico*, ed. Paul Gillingham, Michael Lettieri, and Benjamin T. Smith (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 33–59; Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*, 68–69.

⁵ On Porfirian (and post-revolutionary) censorship, see: Ana María Serna Rodríguez, "Journalists on Trial: The Press, Censorship, and the Law, 1898-1920," in *Journalism, Satire, and Censorship in Mexico*, ed. Paul Gillingham, Michael Lettieri, and Benjamin T. Smith (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 61–81.

⁶ It should be noted that newspapers' affiliations were not necessarily stable, and could change quite rapidly around elections, especially early in the Porfiriato. For instance, *El Diario del Hogar* only became a staunch opponent of Díaz in 1887. Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*, 80. Nonetheless, as will be seen, the paper had criticized the police before then.

⁷ On Bulnes's departure from *El Siglo XIX*, see: Charles Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 115. On *La Convención* editor José María González y González, and his shift from a critical stance to greater support for the regime over time, see: Carlos Illades, *Las otras ideas: el primer socialismo en México, 1850-1935* (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Cuajimalpa; Ediciones Era, 2008), 206–7, 221–28. On workers and workers' organizations' relations with Díaz during the Porfiriato, see: Florencia Gutiérrez, *El mundo del trabajo y el poder político: integración, consenso y resistencia en la ciudad de México a fines del siglo XIX* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2011).

times criticized the government on social issues, pushing for a moderate Catholic reformism. Meanwhile, papers like *El Monitor Republicano* and *El Diario del Hogar* presented the voices of the liberal opposition—largely ineffective in politics, but a prominent presence in the public sphere despite their relatively small print runs.⁸ Satirical papers like *El Hijo del Ahuizote* regularly and sharply criticized the government, while the papers of the “penny press” catered to a more working-class audience, mixing social commentary with slightly more veiled political critique.⁹ In this environment, discussion around policing flourished.

Although the Gendarmería Municipal established in 1879 was substantially similar to prior police forces (as discussed in the previous chapter), it attracted substantial press attention at its founding and was widely heralded as a drastic change. The reform was celebrated not only by police journals like *El Gendarme*, which claimed that it had improved efficacy and public opinion, but elsewhere as well.¹⁰ *La Libertad*, an important paper among the emerging *científico* political-intellectual elite, commended the new regulations, writing that “in general the new police are considerate, knowledgeable, and men of value” in contrast to prior forces.¹¹ Other

⁸ For a brief overview of the Catholic and liberal opposition, see: Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, 37-40. On social Catholicism in Mexico, see: Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, *El catolicismo social: un tercero en discordia. Rerum Novarum, la “cuestión social” y la movilización de los católicos mexicanos (1891-1911)* (México: El Colegio de México, 1991).

⁹ On political satire, see: Fausta Gantús, *Caricatura y poder político: crítica, censura y represión en la Ciudad de México, 1876-1888* (México: El Colegio de México; Instituto Mora, 2009). On the penny press: Robert M. Buffington, *A Sentimental Education for the Working Man: The Mexico City Penny Press, 1900-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ “La policía actual,” *El Gendarme*, 24 September 1879, 1. Having been founded to help improve the image of the police, *El Gendarme* was sensitive negative portrayals, regularly complaining that critical journalists were exaggerating. See, for example: “La prensa y la policía,” *El Gendarme*, 1 September 1879, 1-2.

The reform was also touted, albeit briefly, in Díaz’s annual address to the nation. *El Siglo XIX*, 30 September 1879, 1-3.

¹¹ “La nueva policía,” *La Libertad*, 6 July 1879, 4. On *La Libertad* and its role in the development of the *científicos*’ conservative, positivistic liberalism, see: Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, chap. 2.

periodicals claimed that the new force had reduced crime.¹² But not all papers were so positive about the Gendarmería.¹³ Perhaps the most extensive commentary was that printed in the prominent juridical journal *El Foro*, which ran a series of articles by Manuel G. Prieto, a lawyer and public defender with ties to the political and intellectual elite.¹⁴ “To look upon the police, is to look upon one of the most important questions that can be thought,” he wrote.¹⁵ Prieto devoted much of his series to the longstanding institutional malaise that he saw as only just beginning to change with the reform. Far from a force for law and justice, the police had long been brutally violent and utterly ineffective. Whenever there was a crime—and there were many—they showed up late if they showed up at all, with alcohol on their breath, and arbitrarily arrested whoever they could find rather than actually investigate. When their innocent victims complained, the police simply gave false testimony to cover their own malfeasance. If they were not drinking on duty or terrorizing honest citizens, they were fraternizing with criminals and brutally repressing political opponents. They had changed little if at all, Prieto wrote, since their

¹² “Estadística criminal,” *El Foro*, 25 December 1879. The short article substantially reprints a section from the paper *La Patria*.

¹³ See, for instance, the rather critical piece published in response to *El Gendarme*’s sunny portrayal of reform: “La policía y la sociedad” *El Monitor Republicano*, 27 August 1879, 1.

¹⁴ “El 1o de julio,” *El Foro*, 12 July 1879, 1-2; 16 July 1879, 2-3; and 24 July 1879, 1-2. The son of the noted intellectual and politician Guillermo Prieto, Manuel was active for decades as a public defender. He participated in prison inspections, lobbied for improved carceral conditions for youth, and lectured on criminal law and philosophy. He was well-connected to the intellectual and political elite—among other matters, he was noted as an attendee at one of the first expositions of the phonograph in Mexico City. See: “Adjudication of Lots in the College of San Juan de Letrán,” *Mexican Standard*, 27 January 1868, 2; “Tribunales del Distrito Federal,” *Almanaque Estadístico de las Oficinas y Guías de Forasteros*, 1 January 1871, 44; “Curso de filosofía,” *El Siglo XIX*, 31 July 1871, 3; “Los niños en la cárcel,” *El Monitor Republicano*, 4 April 1875, 3; “El fonógrafo,” *El Siglo XIX*, 23 October 1878, 3; “Abogados de pobres,” *El Foro*, 22 January 1879, 4; “Acta de la visita de cárcel practicada por el Tribunal Superior de Circuito de México el 16 de agosto de 1894,” *El Foro*, 28 August 1894, 3.

El Foro was associated with many important figures in Porfirian politics, especially the group that would come to be known as *científicos*. Its initial group of editors included Justo Sierra, considered the most prominent intellectual of the era, and the well-connected lawyer and politician Pablo Macedo. By 1879, the future finance minister and close Díaz ally José Yves Limantour was one of its editors.

¹⁵ “Fijar los ojos en la policía, es fijarlos en una de las cuestiones más importantes en que entre nosotros puede pensarse.” Manuel G. Prieto, “El 1o de Julio,” *El Foro*, 24 July 1879, 2.

origins as a tool of colonial oppression. The results were clear. Public authority had lost all credibility, justice was impossible, and criminality ran unchecked. All sectors of society hated the police: the respectable saw them as incompetent brutes, while the poor saw them as traitors to their own class. To Prieto, “the radical reform of the police” was “one of the capital’s most imperative necessities,” and he therefore celebrated the 1879 reform while calling for authorities to go still further.¹⁶ Raising wages to attract better personnel, carefully selecting recruits with good personal and moral qualities, and fully training police in their tasks would go a long way toward eliminating many abuses (although it was unclear whether he felt that the new reforms did enough in this regard). More broadly, the government could win public trust by cracking down on arbitrary arrests, ending electoral meddling, and committing to protecting citizens’ rights. Through such measures, Prieto argued, the police could cast off their well-deserved notoriety, break with the legacy of colonialism and post-independence chaos, and would emerge into their true role as the respected modern protectors of society.

As Prieto made clear, legitimizing the police required work. Authorities embraced the rhetoric of reform, with each new Inspector General publically trumpeting their efforts.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, improving the quality of personnel was at the center of reform efforts, because inept, violent, or corrupt police were the clearest sign of disfunction, and firing gendarmes for scandalous abuses was a simple task that was practically guaranteed an enthusiastic reception in the press. Newspapers regularly printed extensive lists of personnel who had been fired, usually for offenses like sleeping on duty, drunkenness, and instances of incompetence and abuse; they

¹⁶ Ibid., 12 July 1879, 1.

¹⁷ Rohlfs, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 56–57.s

also celebrated the promotions and awards given to heroic, morally-upstanding police.¹⁸ Critics also applauded reforms and lauded skilled agents. As *El Diario del Hogar* wrote glowingly in 1881, “the police is now better organized than ever before, its personnel are more numerous, the people who form it have better customs than the old guards, and in all respects it is superior to the police corps of the earlier Republic.”¹⁹

Growing in importance, too, was the Gendarmería’s (purported) technical skill and adoption of new technologies. Fears of crime mounted over the course of the Porfiriato, whether the object of such anxieties was the petty crime and violence of the urban masses, or the figure of the modern, well-organized “professional criminal”.²⁰ To fight modern crime, modern tools were necessary. Police journals, especially, bombastically extolled the introduction of novel equipment like the bicycle, and new systems to identify recidivist criminals.²¹ In their pages,

¹⁸ Police journals reported most extensively on the issue, as part of authorities’ efforts to promote the image of the institution. *El Gendarme* reported, for instance, that 87 police were fired in July of 1879 (“Durante el mes de julio,” *El Gendarme*, 8 August 1879, 3-4). It also, especially from February 1880 onward, publicized police who had distinguished themselves in their service; see, for example: “Gendarmería Municipal,” *El Gendarme*, 1 February 1880, 2-3. For later examples celebrating meritorious police, see: “El Gendarme Núm. 1053, Sotero Ortega,” *Gaceta de Policía*, 19 November 1905, 6; “Gendarme cumplido,” *Gaceta de Policía*, 28 January 1906, 8; “Mercedia recompensa,” *Boletín de Policía*, 19 September 1909. For the punishment of police misconduct, see: “Gendarme insubordinado,” *Gaceta de Policía*, 18 February 1906, 8; “Moralización de la Policía,” *Boletín de Policía*, 13 February 1910. On police journals, see: Speckman Guerra, *Crimen y castigo*, 115–20; Castillo Garza, “La imagen del policía,” 55–74.

Ordinary newspapers also reported on firings and distinguished police. See, for example, “Gendarmes distinguidos,” *La Voz de México*, 27 September 1879; “Gendarmería Municipal,” *La Voz de México*, 28 September 1879.

¹⁹ “La policía está ahora mejor organizada que nunca, cuenta con un personal más numeroso, los individuos que la forman son de mejores costumbres que los antiguos guardas, y en todo y por todo es muy superior a los cuerpos de su clase que ha habido en la República.” From: F.J. Gómez Flores, “Crónica del día,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 26 November 1881, 1. For other examples from the paper, see: “Vivacs,” 7 October 1881, 3 (applauding the planned establishment of multiple local police headquarters throughout the city); “Nicolás Giles,” 5 August 1885, 3 (on the promotion of an exemplary officer). It should be noted that such writings predate *El Diario*’s 1887 shift to intransigent opposition (as mentioned earlier in the Chapter); however, as will be discussed, the paper also published plenty of critiques of the police in this early period.

²⁰ Piccato, *City of Suspects*; Garza, *The Imagined Underworld*; Speckman Guerra, *Crimen y castigo*, Part II; Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico*.

²¹ The introduction of the bicycle was portrayed as a major step toward parity with modern police forces in Europe and the United States. “Una nueva mejora en el servicio de nuestra policía,” *Boletín de Policía*, 2 January 1910. On criminal identification, see: “Identificación de criminales – sistema antropométrico (Método Bertillon),”

policing was increasingly portrayed as a sphere of specialized knowledge, and many articles laid out step-by-step directions for criminal investigation and basic duties.²² Some pieces verged on the absurd, such as one article that fancifully claimed gendarmes regularly had to read messages written in code or in invisible ink.²³ While police journals may have been useful to gendarmes (although it is doubtful that many read them), the main point was to add to the impression of a modernizing police force. More successful in this regard (to a point) were the numerous stories in mass dailies and specialist publications alike that detailed gendarmes' achievements in capturing dangerous criminals and successfully investigating convoluted schemes.²⁴

Unsurprisingly, the purported success of police modernization was most frequently discussed in pro-government papers. Periodicals like *El Partido Liberal* went so far as to claim that the Gendarmería was better than London's Metropolitan Police, regarded as the most exemplary police force of the era.²⁵ In 1894, *El Siglo XIX* grandiosely proclaimed that "Today it can be said that not a single crime goes unpunished," and (with much exaggeration) stated that

Boletín de Policía, 12 September 1909; "El sistema dactiloscópico: su implantación en México," *Boletín de Policía*, 17 October 1909; "El sistema dactiloscópico," *Boletín de Policía*, 2 January 1910; "El retrato hablado," *Boletín de Policía*, 28 November 1909. On the partial adoption of the Bertillon system of criminal identification: Elisa Speckman Guerra, "La identificación de criminales y los sistemas ideados por Alphonse Bertillon: discursos y prácticas (Ciudad de México 1895-1913)," *Historia y Grafía*, no. 17 (2001): 99–129.

²² "Indicaciones útiles para las investigaciones de policía," *Boletín de Policía*, 26 September 1909, 3 October 1909, 27 February 1910, 6 March 1910, and 13 March 1910; "Indicaciones para los empleados de policía," *Boletín de Policía*, 19 and 26 December 1909, and 6 March 1910.

²³ "Arte de descifrar los escritos secretos o en clave," *Boletín de Policía*, 5 December 1909.

²⁴ For instance: "Antes que dejarla ir, le hundió un filoso puñal," *El Imparcial*, 11 January 1909, 6; "Un crimen en el misterio," *El Imparcial*, 17 June 1910, 9. Such writing was often collected in crime sections with titles like "Por los mundos del delito" (*El Imparcial*, 4 August 1909, 8) or "Por tribunales y comisarías" (*El Imparcial*, 26 June 1910, 7). Investigations into scams, in particular, were especially treated as opportunities to celebrate the skill of the police. See, for instance, "Un gran estafador," *El Imparcial*, 4 May 1903, 4, which praised how the police tracked down a cunning con artist "casi sin datos de donde partir." See also: "El timo del testamento," *Boletín de Policía*, 12 September 1909.

²⁵ "La policía y 'El Diario del Hogar'," *El Partido Liberal*, 3 January 1893, 1. The London police were regularly held up as a model to follow. "La policía de la capital," *El Siglo XIX*, 2 March 1889, 1; "La depreciación de la policía," *El Siglo XIX*, 27 November 1889, 1; "Una falta de civilización," *El Siglo XIX*, 18 May 1892, 1; "Boletín," *El Diario del Hogar*, 21 May 1892, 1; "La policía de Londres," *El Diario del Hogar*, 30 September 1902, 1.

public disorder and drunkenness had totally disappeared under the watchful eye of the gendarmes. Foreign visitors “can do no less than applaud an Administration whose police is so well-organized,” the paper wrote, and the government was thus “raising to great heights the credit and the good name of the *Patria*.”²⁶

It was certainly hyperbolic, but *El Siglo* was right about one thing: foreign visitors almost uniformly celebrated the Porfirian police. In this, police reforms met their most notable success. Casting off Mexico’s notoriety for banditry and making the country safe for business was an important prerequisite for enticing the foreign investors central to Porfirian development plans.²⁷ No place served as a better showcase of the new, secure Mexico than the capital.²⁸ And travelers played their part with enthusiasm, lavishing praise on the police.²⁹ Foreign visitors regularly claimed that Mexico’s reputation for violence was a thing of the past, and wrote flattering comparisons with cities elsewhere in the world that were typically held as exemplars of modernity.³⁰ “Mexico is the best policed city on the continent,” the American traveler Olive Percival enthused, and on the eve of the Revolution, the editor of the American journal *The Overland Monthly* wrote, “I do not believe that I lay myself open to the charge of exaggeration when I say that I firmly believe that it is the most efficient corps in the world, Paris not

²⁶ “Persecución a los criminales. Juicio de los extranjeros sobre la policía mexicana,” *El Siglo XIX*, 17 April 1894, 1. Quotes: “Hoy puede decirse que ningun delito queda impune.” “[...]”no pudieron menos que aplaudir una Administración cuya policía está tan bien organizada”. “Es que el Gobierno mexicano ha sabido levantar muy alto el crédito y el buen nombre de la Patria.”

²⁷ Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress*.

²⁸ Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, chap. 1; Moya Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura, historia y poder*.

²⁹ Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 81.

³⁰ See, for example: Olive Percival, *Mexico City: An Idler’s Notebook* (Chicago: Herbert S. Stone and Company, 1901), 51–52; William English Carson, *Mexico: The Wonderland of the South*, Revised Edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914), 213–14.

excepted.”³¹ The British journalist W.E. Carson glowingly reported that the gendarmes “have made the streets of the capital almost as safe as those of New York.”³² Elsewhere, he lauded the visible and seemingly extensive security afforded at night by the lantern-wielding police stationed on street corners: “The long row of flickering lights, up and down, in every direction, has a curious effect; but to the law-abiding it is a comforting one, indicating as it does that the Argus-eye of the law is on the sleeping city.”³³ But for all that tourists and government allies praised the police, domestic discussions presented a more critical perspective.

Petitioning Modern Security

The “Argus-eye of the law” that Carson celebrated was much less far-seeing than he described. Police were heavily concentrated in the city center, and residents of the fast-growing urban periphery regularly petitioned for improved access to police service.³⁴ Whether they dated to post-1879 or predated the Gendarmería, the substance was essentially the same: too many capitalinos lacked sufficient access to the purported protection offered by the police. In their petitions, residents of varying social status framed policing as a basic public service. Petitions shed light on the spread of ideas of urban life that framed security, as guaranteed by an active and attentive professional police force, as a basic public service and a key component of the

³¹ Percival, *Mexico City*, 30; “Organization of the Police Department in the Federal District,” *The Overland Monthly*, July 1910, 114.

³² Carson, *Mexico*, 51. It should be noted that Carson’s generally enthusiastic portrayal was somewhat balanced by his critique that Mexican police were “very often arrogant” and officious. Carson, 214.

³³ Carson, 50.

³⁴ Of the capital’s eight police demarcaciones, six claimed a slice of the city center, and the majority of police were invariably concentrated downtown. Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 82–84.

modern city.³⁵ They also suggest a degree of legitimation of policing as an aspect of urban governance despite, as will be discussed, the many criticisms lobbed against the institution.

Demands for police service, often stated alongside demands for other public services as well, were especially frequent along the periphery of the capital and in the outlying municipalities, particularly those that were closely linked to Mexico City. In Tacuba, for instance, complaints of crime from residents drove the foundation and rapid expansion of a professional municipal police force around the turn of the century.³⁶ Deficiencies in police protection and other services justified petitions by residents in neighboring towns to be annexed—often by the capital, but sometimes even just by a purportedly more responsive municipality—and removed from the jurisdiction of reportedly neglectful local governments that failed to provide them with modern services.³⁷ Petitioners from La Piedad who requested

³⁵ For petitions and what Christina Jiménez has termed “popular modernizers” beyond Mexico City, see: Christina M. Jiménez, “The Networked City: Popular Modernizers and Urban Transformation in Morelia, Mexico, 1880-1955,” in *Urban Theory Beyond the West: A World of Cities*, ed. Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 157–72; Jiménez, *Making an Urban Public*.

³⁶ See, for example, AHCM, Municipalidades, Azcapotzalco, Policía, Caja 7, Exp. 4: Letter of Miguel E. Camacho to Federal District Governor, 6 March 1900; *Ibid.*, Tacuba de Morelos, Policía, Caja 39, Exp. 1: Letter of Vicente Luengas to Presidente Municipal, 20 December 1900. The Tacuba Ayuntamiento formed a daytime “policía municipal diurno” of fifteen men in January 1900, at the same time that it increased the size of the existing force of nighttime “serenos” from seven to fourteen. They soon expanded the daytime force to twenty-two gendarmes and created a specialized police administration. The force was further expanded later that year, and again in January of 1901. See: AHCM, Municipalidades, Azcapotzalco, Policía, Caja 7, Exp. 1 (expansion of serenos); *Ibid.*, Ayuntamiento, Caja 1, Exp. 12 (formation of policía municipal diurno); *Ibid.*, Caja 1, Exp. 33 (expansion of police force and separation from ramo de alumbrado); *Ibid.*, Caja 2, Exp. 111 (further expansion of police, late 1900); *Ibid.*, Caja 2, Exp. 140 (January 1901 expansion of police). The institution was subsumed into the Gendarmería with the 1903 centralization of the Federal District.

³⁷ See, for instance: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 12, Exp. 98 (petition by residents of La Piedad to be removed from Tacubaya and annexed by Mexico City in 1874); *Ibid.*, Caja 15, Exp. 85 (on the petition by residents of Nonoalco and San Lorenzo to be removed from Tacubaya and annexed by Mixcoac, which was opposed by a counterpetition of other residents of the same towns, in 1895); AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Vol. 520, Exp. 48 (petition by residents of Colonia Tlaxpana to be annexed by Mexico City from Tacuba, in 1912). In all three cases, issues of public services were at the heart of residents’ complaints, and police and insecurity played a prominent role in the first two at least (the latter petition from Colonia Tlaxpana was less specific but mentioned *policía* alongside other services like lighting, water, sanitation, paving, and schools. Given that those services would have been considered under the old, broad conception of *policía*, it seems likely that they used the term in its more modern, security-related sense.

annexation gave a long list of grievances about deficient public services and persistent insecurity, and concluded by noting that their deprivation was all the more apparent compared to the modern capital: “And this when we are at the gates of Mexico City [...]”³⁸

Yet the capital was hardly immune to such problems; capitalinos who lived beyond the city center had similar complaints before and after the foundation of the Gendarmería Municipal. In 1877, petitioners from Colonia Buenavista in the northwest lamented that, although they were dutiful taxpayers, “we lack that which is most indispensable to live even passably in society.” Policing loomed large in their letter, and they particularly noted with alarm a recent deadly traffic accident and the discovery of a corpse that had been left in the street an entire day, both of which they said could have been avoided with an increased police presence.³⁹ Other petitioners harshly criticized city officials for prioritizing development in the city center and ignoring the periphery, claiming the right to live in a modern city for themselves. “It is not just, that our [tax] contributions, are only invested in amenities for those that live and own property in the central streets,” petitioners from around the Callejón del Nopalito on the impoverished northern periphery wrote early in the Porfiriato. They compared the downtown’s gardens, marble sidewalks, and gaslamps with their own darkened, flood-prone, and filthy streets, and especially noted that “in the center they enjoy a great Police that takes care of them, while here we have to

Disputes over municipal territory were frequent, and many annexation requests likely reflected political divisions within municipalities. Nonetheless, it is notable that concerns over the provision of policing were seen as legitimating annexation. On annexation requests (including the two mentioned from Tacubaya), see: Miranda Pacheco, *Tacubaya*, 112–14.

³⁸ AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 12, Exp. 98*: Petition originally sent 14 August 1874. “¡Y esto cuando nos encontramos a las puertas de la Ciudad de México, y cuando los elementos propios de la Piedad, no demandan otra cosa que el auxilio de las autoridades, para hacer felices a sus moradores!”

³⁹ AHCM, *Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Vol. 519, Exp. 5*: Petition of 20 February 1877. “[...] no obstante pagar con puntualidad las contribuciones respectivas, carecemos de lo más indispensable para vivir medianamente en sociedad, como por ejemplo, alumbrado, policía, banquetas, aunque sean de piedra menuda, atarjeas.”

go about at night, and even during the day, with a pistol in hand, to spare ourselves surprises from criminals.”⁴⁰ They further bemoaned that residents and passersby alike faced attacks from roving bandits, and were “subject to living under the Law of the strongest, because we lack police, as much during the day as at night, who care for public Security.”⁴¹

Petitioners actively employed rhetorics of modernization and public order that they thought would appeal to city officials. Yet, while this rhetoric served as a homogenizing veil, hints that at least some petitioners held other priorities occasionally slipped through. Police were not the only response to insecurity—residents regularly requested expanded streetlight service as a means of providing security.⁴² Whether they did so because they considered streetlights a more permanent solution, compared to a gendarme who could easily be sent elsewhere once they ceased their complaints or because they were wary of increased police surveillance (perhaps informed by hard experience or regular press reports of police abuses, it suggests that not all residents found expanding policing a priority despite widespread security concerns.

⁴⁰ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía en General, Vol. 3636, Exp. 801: Petition of 15 March 1878. The petitioners lived near the the Callejón del Nopalito and the Puente de los Tecolotes, on the city’s northern edge a few blocks west of Tepito. As they wrote, “no es justo, que nuestras contribuciones, solo se inviertan en las comodidades de los que viven y tienen propiedades en las calles céntricas, pues mientras allí tienen jardines y embanquetados de marmol, e nosotros en nuestras calles, no nos ponen ni un carro de basura que tape su hoyo o fango, mientras allí disfrutan con profución alumbrados de gas hidrógeno, aquí carecemos de una miserable candileja de aceite, y por último: en el centro disfrutan de una gran Policía que los cuide, mientras que aquí tenemos que andar de noche, y aún de día, con pistola en mano, para librarnos de una sorpresa de los criminales.”

⁴¹ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Policía en General, Vol. 3636, Exp. 801: Petition of 15 March 1878. According to the petition, “nosotros y los que tienen que transitar por dichas calles, están sujetos a vivir bajo la Ley del más fuerte; porque carecemos de Policía, tanto de día, como de noche; que cuide de la Seguridad pública, y que evite los crímenes que con frecuencia se cometen por los bandidos, que tienen la seguridad de no ser aprehendidos y castigados.” [Emphasis in the original].

⁴² On petitions for streetlights, see: Ivette Orijel Serrano, “Escenas ciudadanas de descontento: quejas, demandas, denuncias y protestas de los sectores medios urbanos en la Ciudad de México, 1892-1910” (Ph.D. Dissertation, History, México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016), 97–111. For two examples from Tacubaya that complained of disorder and insecurity but requested only streetlights rather than police, see: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 372, Exp. 38: Petition of 1 October 1889; *Ibid.*, Caja 373, Exp. 32: Petition of 27 January 1899.

However, many did request police service. It is difficult to specify the exact class profile of petitioners in most cases, although it seems likely that they were established male residents in most cases, and that landlords were particularly well-represented among petitioners; on the other hand, it was not uncommon for petitioners to be unable to sign their name or (more often) to have had exceptionally unsteady handwriting perhaps indicating limited literacy, suggesting that some petitioners had little education. In most cases, signatories were described simply as *vecinos* (hearkening back to ideas of *vecindad* discussed in Chapter One), or as a mixture of *vecinos* and landlords.⁴³ While some petitioners referenced to their status as taxpayers to justify their requests, most simply framed the provision of security as a basic duty of government.⁴⁴ Some petitions, including several from turn-of-the-century Tacuba, one from residents of the newly-settled western end of the elegant Paseo de la Reforma in 1901, and one from the developer of Colonia Hidalgo in 1889, came directly from the well-connected and wealthy.⁴⁵ In the last case,

⁴³ For a petition from “*vecinos*,” see: AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 372, Exp. 38*: Petition of 1 October 1889. The petition from the 1895 dispute over the status of San Lorenzo and Nonoalco, which included about ninety signatories, stated that the petitioners were a mix of “*vecinos*” and “*dueños de propiedades*” in the towns. *Ibid.*, *Tacubaya, Ayuntamiento, Caja 15, Exp. 85*. Similarly, a 1912 petition from Colonia La Tlaxpana was written by “*propietarios y vecinos*”. AHCM, *Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Vol. 520, Exp. 48*.

Practically all the petitioners during the Porfiriato seem to have been men, based on their names. In a notable exception, the 1899 Tacubaya petition included at least two, and possibly three women—Ana Gómez (identified as the “widow of Olvera”), Petronila Olvera, and (possibly) Concepción Jiménez—among its twenty signatories. AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 373, Exp. 32*: Petition of 27 January 1899.

⁴⁴ Besides the examples mentioned earlier, residents made recourse to their status as taxpayers in: AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 372, Exp. 38*: Petition of 1 October 1889; *Ibid.*, *Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Vol. 520, Exp. 48*: Petition of 30 July 1912.

⁴⁵ On Colonia Hidalgo, see: AHCM, *Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Vol. 519, Exp. 10*. On the Paseo de la Reforma, see: AHCM, *Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Colonia de Teja, Vol. 521, Exp. 11*. On Tacuba, see: AHCM, *Municipalidades, Azcapotzalco, Policía, Caja 7, Exp. 4*: Letter of Miguel E. Camacho to Federal District Governor, 6 March 1900; *Ibid.*, *Tacuba de Morelos, Policía, Caja 39, Exp. 1*: Letter of Vicente Luengas to Presidente Municipal, 20 December 1900. Camacho explained in his letter that he ran a brickyard owned by Senator Carlos Rivas. Luengas was a figure of some prominence in Tacuba, who had been charged with organizing the celebrations around the new century. On Luengas, see: *Ibid.*, *Azcapotzalco, Ayuntamiento, Caja 2, Exp. 103*: Cabildo session of 24 December 1900.

It should be noted that, beyond the police, the wealthy could draw on their own resources for security, to some degree, whether that meant hiring private guards or, as occurred for Vicente Luengas, having domestic workers who repeatedly foiled burglary attempts. On private security as a response to the failure of the government

especially, the petition clearly expressed the developer's hope that the provision of security through policing would help attract residents to the new colonia. However, other complaints came from working-class neighborhoods like Colonia de la Bolsa, where they were most likely written not by the poorest residents, but by shopkeepers or skilled workers who counted on some degree of status.⁴⁶

Despite residents' efforts to make the government live up to the purported promises offered by the professional police, their complaints often fell on deaf ears. Many requests, including some by the wealthy (such as those mentioned from Colonia Hidalgo and Colonia Juárez), were rejected outright.⁴⁷ At times, petitions and press complaints succeeded in forcing the government to temporarily send patrols through underserved neighborhoods, yet this rarely lasted, even as the police force expanded in size over the course of the Porfiriato.⁴⁸ In the press as in petitions, the lack of police service beyond the city center became a crucial problem, sitting alongside other critiques that focused more on police abuses, corruption, and inefficacy.⁴⁹

to provide police: "Guardas," *El Monitor Republicano*, 22 June 1878, 4. On Luengas: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacuba de Morelos, Policía, Caja 39, Exp. 1: Letter of 20 December 1900, Vicente Luengas to Presidente Municipal of Tacuba. As mentioned earlier, Luengas had some degree of prominence in Tacuba.

⁴⁶ See, for instance, the letter published by a resident who complained that lack of police put at risk "los vecinos honrados que viven en la mil veces fatídica Colonia de la Bolsa." "Alborotadores de barrio," *El Diario del Hogar*, 26 October 1909, 2.

⁴⁷ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Vol. 519, Exp. 10; AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Colonia de Teja, Vol. 521, Exp. 11. Their failure stemmed in part from their having petitioned the Ayuntamiento, which had no authority over the Gendarmería and simply shrugged off their security concerns as beyond its jurisdiction.

⁴⁸ Rohlfs, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City," 86–87.

⁴⁹ For a handful of representative examples from papers of varying political affiliations, see: "En las Colonias de Guerrero," *El Diario del Hogar*, 25 November 1881, 5; "Notas y comentarios," *El Tiempo*, 26 November 1903, 2; "La cuna del crimen," *El Imparcial*, 3, 4, and 6 July 1908 (respectively, pages 1 and 8, 8, and 4); "Alborotadores de barrio," *El Diario del Hogar*, 26 October 1909, 2.

Framing the Police Problem

In 1899, the satirical journal *El Hijo del Ahuizote* published a lengthy poem mocking the government's claims to have generated security. After complaining of the prevalence of theft, it insinuated that the police were in league with burglars and denounced them as incompetent and abusive. As the three most directly critical stanzas put it:

Se roban cincuenta mil
de un baúl de tejamaníl
y se alejan con descaro,
y la policía con artes
los olfatea en todas partes
y en ninguna los ve claro.

Fifty thousand [pesos] are stolen
from a shingled trunk
and they insolently get away,
and the police with cunning
sniff them out in all parts
and nowhere see them clearly.

Cogen a Juan y a Francisco
y al jorobado y el bizco
y al ciego y al del violón,
investigan de mil modos
y al fin agarran a todos....
pero menos al ladrón.

They seize Juan and Francisco
and the hunchback and the cross-eyed man
and the blind one and the bass player,
they investigate in a thousand ways
and in the end they nab everyone...
except for the thief.

Cien agentes reservados
ponen un mes apostados
en cantinas y mesones,
y mientras, a lo estratégico,
por todas partes de México
van y vienen los ladrones.

One hundred detectives
spend a month posted
in cantinas and lodges,
and all the while, being strategic,
through all parts of Mexico
the thieves come and go.

Elsewhere, the poem further complained of police clumsiness in pursuing suspects, writing that “the police / chase them night and day / but... with the footsteps of an iguana.”⁵⁰ Such critiques were rooted in the apparent failure to live up to the promises of the 1879 reform.⁵¹

As the Porfiriato progressed, press criticism of the police mounted. Reports on corruption and abuse were regular occurrences, especially in the opposition press, which used them to

⁵⁰ “la policía / los persigue noche y día / pero... con pasos de iguana.” “A robos descarados Policía en casa,” *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, 22 October 1899, 6.

⁵¹ This point was made most directly in “Plumadas,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 30 July 1885, 2.

criticize the government. In a typical example, on 21 January 1885, *El Diario del Hogar* detailed three recent incidents. One gendarme had arrested two women on false charges of “offenses against the police” (*faltas a la policía*) after one turned down his sexual advances; another had shot and killed a companion in an argument over his *amasía* [common-law wife]; and a third had come upon a costumed group heading to a masquerade and brutally beaten a young man who was dressed as a woman.⁵² Violence propped up police impunity. Excoriating the police in 1892 as “microscopic czars of the cudgel,” *El Diario* pointed to instances where citizens who denounced abuses—including one of the paper’s own editors—were forced under threat of arrest to retract their claims.⁵³ More mundanely, the police were often criticized for corruption and arbitrariness, especially in failing to take action against wealthy offenders or owners of drinking establishments that violated regulations.⁵⁴ If the 1879 reforms had been heralded as creating a modern, professional force that would protect all citizens’ rights equally, such critiques pointed to the project’s apparent failure.

Relatedly, the police were castigated as ineffectual at promoting modern public order, whether out of corruption, organizational malaise, or simple ineptitude. Even pro-government papers at times acknowledged that administrative problems hindered effectiveness.⁵⁵ Catholic papers claimed that gendarmes ignored moral offenses (such as open prostitution, public drunkenness, and obscenity), especially when punishing said offenses would require violating

⁵² “Asuntos del día,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 21 January 1885, 1.

⁵³ “Boletín,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 26 October 1892, 1. “los czares microscópicos de garrote”. For other examples of police violence, see, for instance: “Boletín,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 15 October 1892, 1 (which detailed five cases of recent police abuses), and “La retractación de Treffel,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 9 May 1891, 2 (which decried the frequent use of torture and other procedural irregularities to generate confessions).

⁵⁴ For example, see: “Asuntos del día,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 14 May 1885, 1; Antonio de P. Moreno, “De acuerdo,” *La Voz de México*, 9 June 1885, 1; “La Policía,” *El Tiempo*, 22 September 1885, 2; “Boletín,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 23 August 1892, 1.

⁵⁵ “Las reformas administrativas y la prensa de oposición,” *El Siglo XIX*, 3 June 1896, 1.

class hierarchies and policing the behavior of the more outwardly respectable classes who counted on impunity.⁵⁶ Similar concerns animated the liberal opposition. In an 1882 article calling on the Police Inspector General to carry out an undercover inspection, *El Diario del Hogar* claimed that he would find “everything... but a gendarme” in the city’s public spaces. Drunks fighting in the street or sprawled on the sidewalk; food vendors, coal sellers, and shopkeepers blocking public spaces; roving prostitutes; peripatetic bands of musicians playing “an infernal serenade” at all hours; and nowhere the police to impose order.⁵⁷ *El Diario* regularly denounced the failure of the police to take action against “scandalous” public drunkenness, “shameless” prostitutes, disruptive public behavior, and other activities (such as folk healing) that were seen as having no place in an orderly modern city.⁵⁸ This stemmed in part from how gendarmes regularly drank, ate, and gossiped on duty, forming ties with those around them instead of policing them.⁵⁹ The police problem was a problem not only because it exposed citizens to brutal abuses of power, but also because it inhibited the use of the police to modernize and order society by rooting out unwanted practices—a goal shared between supporters of the government and the liberal and Catholic oppositions, as public order was to some extent imagined as an apolitical aspect of basic governance.

⁵⁶ “De acuerdo,” *La Voz de México*, 9 June 1885, 1.

⁵⁷ “El torno del Hogar,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 20 April 1882, 1-2.

⁵⁸ For examples in *El Diario del Hogar* calling for the policing of drunken scandals, “immoral” street vendors, loud theater goers, and folk healers, see: “Escándalos,” 6 October 1881, 3; “A la policía,” 30 October 1881, 3; “Al Secretario de Justicia,” 8 November 1881, 3; “El Teatro Principal,” 15 November 1881, 3; “Muy grave,” 26 November 1881, 3. Such calls were not limited to the early years of the Porfiriato. For later examples, see *El Diario*’s calls for the police to clear market vendors who were blocking public space and to intervene on festival days against drunken revelers (“Abuso que debe corregirse” and “Falta de policía,” 24 January 1900, 3); to crack down on public drinking and to remove a disfigured beggar from a central street (“Otro defecto de policía” and “Un mendigo de aspect repugnante,” 25 January 1900, 3); and to take strong actions against “scandals” occasioned by prostitutes in the Alameda park (“Las mujerzuelas en la Alameda,” 7 February 1900, 3).

⁵⁹ See, for instance: “El torno del hogar,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 20 April 1882,” 1-2; “Asuntos del día,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 14 May 1885, 1.

If the deficiencies of the police were all too apparent, diagnosing their root cause and finding solutions was a different matter.⁶⁰ The police problem was heavily debated, presenting a microcosm of different ideologies' views of the wider problems of Mexican society and governance; this was especially so for the Catholic and liberal opposition. Catholic papers broadly blamed the situation on the moral and societal decay occasioned by the triumph of liberalism.⁶¹ More concretely, they located the problem within the police themselves. *La Voz de México* lamented that the police force was "composed generally of vulgar men, without culture, without consciousness of their duties, and mostly pertaining to the lower classes."⁶² With little difference between gendarmes and the (purportedly) amoral masses, it was no wonder that the former were so prone to abuses. As *El Tiempo* emphasized, this problem was reinforced by low pay and the common practice of withholding wages to pay for equipment, and moreover was hardly limited to the rank and file: immoral police officials profited from gambling and prostitution, blocking the policing of vice. The paper thus called for raising salaries to attract better recruits and for firing corrupt police and officials.⁶³ Liberal papers often took a similar view that the police problem was a symptom of broader dissolution, although they blamed not

⁶⁰ For reasons of space, this chapter does not deeply study the Porfirian popular press. While the popular press did often advance criticism of the police, it often was broadly similar to the the liberal opposition press in this regard, and moreover often shared the same contradictions regarding public order. Police were at times portrayed as incompetent, ineffective, or abusive. However, as Robert Buffington has shown, the popular press was itself divided on some issues of disorder. While papers like *El Guacamaya* criticized police repression of popular practices like drinking as unnecessarily harsh, others like *El Diablito Rojo* took a more moralizing stance against alcohol that could legitimate policing. Buffington, *A Sentimental Education*, chap. 4; Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, chap. 5.

Similarly, writings on the police from cooperativist socialist publications were also often practically indistinguishable from liberal critiques, focusing on the insufficient number of gendarmes and their low pay. *El Socialista*, for example, regularly called for workers to support police in maintaining security; see: "Policía," 14 July 1872, 1; "Gendarmes," 3 December 1883, 3; "Cosas de policía," 13 September 1885, 1; "Auxilio a la policía," 4 March 1888, 1. On *El Socialista*, see: Illades, *Las otras ideas*, 215–21.

⁶¹ "De acuerdo," *La Voz de México*, 9 June 1885, 1; "El gobierno y la corrupción social," *El Tiempo*, 26 February 1891, 2.

⁶² "De acuerdo," *La Voz de México*, 9 June 1885, 1.

⁶³ "La policía," *El Tiempo*, 22 September 1885, 2.

liberalism, but the corruption and violence of Díaz's government. Nonetheless, papers like *El Diario del Hogar* still hoped that reforms could be efficacious. Improving gendarmes' pay and ending the practice of withholding part of their wages were common suggestions, as were better hiring practices to end favoritism and nepotism.⁶⁴ *El Diario* also called for stronger discipline, as, whenever out of sight of their superiors, police preferred gossiping, eating, and drinking with those they should have been policing over actually carrying out their duties.⁶⁵ The paper furthermore promoted organizational reforms: making comisarías more accessible, modifying patrol practices, and eliminating the ineffectual and particularly abusive Policía Secreta (the plainclothes investigative corps).⁶⁶ Through reforms, *El Diario* claimed that Mexico could attain a preventive, and not merely reactive, police force that would guarantee the security of all, and the broader improvement of the city, by upholding the law free of personalistic entanglements.⁶⁷

Pro-government papers, in contrast, usually blamed the police problem on the Mexican people. Papers aimed at the respectable classes portrayed the broader population as backward and easily swayed into hating the police by the critical reporting of the opposition, while government-aligned working-class papers called for the population to understand the difficulties of police work and to show respect to police.⁶⁸ This argument was developed to its furthest point

⁶⁴ "El torno del hogar," *El Diario del Hogar*, 4 May 1882, 1-2; "Reformas al personal de la policía," *El Diario del Hogar*, 9 January 1885, 4; "Asuntos del día," *El Diario del Hogar*, 21 January 1885, 1; "Asuntos del día," *El Diario del Hogar*, 9 May 1885, 1; "Plumadas," *El Diario del Hogar*, 30 July 1885, 2; "Una necesidad del Distrito Federal," *El Diario del Hogar*, 1 November 1889, 2; "Boletín," *El Diario del Hogar*, 23 August 1892, 1.

⁶⁵ "El torno del hogar," *El Diario del Hogar*, 20 April 1882, 1-2; "Asuntos del día," *El Diario del Hogar*, 14 May 1885, 1.

⁶⁶ "El torno del hogar," *El Diario del Hogar*, 20 April 1882, 1-2; "Plumadas," *El Diario del Hogar*, 30 July 1885, 2; "Plumadas," *El Diario del Hogar*, 15 August 1885, 2.

⁶⁷ In 1885, the paper lamented that "No sabemos que la policía preventiva haya sido entre nosotros una realidad," and called for the police to not limit themselves to crime, but also to engage in "la intervención directa de todo lo que concierne a la sociedad," including sanitary work. "Asuntos del día," *El Diario del Hogar*, 14 May 1885, 1.

⁶⁸ "La depreciación de la policía," *El Siglo XIX*, 27 November 1889, 1; "Una falta de civilización," *El Siglo XIX*, 18 May 1892, 1. In 1892, *La Patria* blamed violence against a police officer at an anti-reelection protest on

in a fierce, front-page polemic in 1891 between *El Municipio Libre*, a paper sympathetic to the government, and *El Diario del Hogar*. The debate took place in a moment of crisis: a highly publicized robbery and murder in the centrally-located La Profesa jewelry store spurred something of a legitimacy crisis for the police as a number of papers questioned their competence and efficacy.⁶⁹ *El Municipio* charged critics of the police with naively believing that officials could transform the nation with the stroke of a pen, ignoring deeper social problems that stymied any reform effort. The Mexican people, *El Municipio* claimed, were backward and utterly resistant to modernization. Driven by the “insufficient development of the habits of sociability and the nearly complete absence of passion for the public good,” the urban masses made up a “powerful and irreconcilable enemy of the police,” intransigently opposing efforts to instill order and pursue criminals with such vehemence that officials were powerless to correct the problem.⁷⁰ Yet its roots went deeper. *El Municipio* allowed that low pay and lack of training hindered the police, but these ills were too expensive to be rectified, and more importantly, broader social forces made organizational reforms futile. Gendarmes were doomed to be just as uncivilized as the masses they policed, as “innumerable social, intellectual, and moral

“uno de esos peladillos de barrio que odian profundamente a la policía,” which it claimed was due in large part to the lower classes’ lack of education. “Pasa de raya,” *La Patria*, 18 May 1892, 3. In 1887, *La Convención Radical* wrote that “Por nuestra parte, amigos sinceros de la clase obrera, le aconsejamos que vea en la policía la institución más interesante y benéfica de un pueblo; que la respeten y obedezcan, y que la auxilien en todo cuanto fuese necesario: esto hace un pueblo culto para tener derecho a su seguridad.” “Respeto profundo,” *La Convención Radical*, 9 January 1887, 2-3.

⁶⁹ For a broader treatment of the La Profesa case and its implications, see: Garza, *The Imagined Underworld*, 113–30.

The articles in question, in chronological order, are: “La policía. – Causas que se abren a su acción,” *El Municipio Libre*, 28 July 1891, 1; “Boletín,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 31 July 1891, 1; “La policía,” *El Municipio Libre*, 6 August 1891, 1; “A ‘El Municipio Libre,’” *El Diario del Hogar*, 8 August 1891, 1; “La policía. – Su estado presente y lo que haría un Código,” *El Municipio Libre*, 20 August 1891, 1; “Boletín,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 22 August 1891, 1. See also the trio of articles published in *La Convención Radical Obrera* on 1 March 1891 that responded to the incident and debate: “El crimen en México” (pg. 1), “El Distrito Federal” (pg. 2), and “El ‘Monitor’ y la policía” (pg. 3).

⁷⁰ Quotes from: “La policía. – Causas que se abren a su acción,” *El Municipio Libre*, 28 July 1891, 1.

circumstances” conspired to keep honorable, skilled men from having any interest in working as police.⁷¹ *El Municipio* argued that any discussion of the police needed to take into account Mexican social reality: “The question comes down to knowing, not whether we have good police, but if we have the best police possible given the economic, intellectual, and moral state of our society.”⁷² For *El Municipio*, the violent, corrupt, and ineffectual Gendarmería was the best that could be hoped for, its malaise a symptom of, and excused by, Mexico’s backwardness.

Of course, *El Diario del Hogar* disagreed. It forcefully argued that *El Municipio* merely wanted to deny the government’s responsibility for its defective police when it obviously had the obligation to “impel the Nation toward its progress.”⁷³ But the government had shunned reforms, *El Diario* wrote, including obvious ones that had been suggested by many observers: “by no means in the slightest has it tried to increase wages, to increase the number of personnel, or to reduce hours of service [e.g., decrease the length of shifts to make police work less exhausting and more attractive].”⁷⁴ Moreover, while the paper acknowledged that the police met with popular disdain, it contended that this was due “to the mistreatment, to the vexations that the people at the bottom [*el pueblo ínfimo*] receive from those who should be impartial guardians of the law.”⁷⁵ Popular respect for the police would come in due time once abuses had been corrected. Yet, for all that *El Diario* was right to frame *El Municipio*’s argument as a simple

⁷¹ Quotes from: “La policía. – Causas que se oponen a su acción,” *El Municipio Libre*, 28 July 1891, 1.

⁷² Quote from: “La policía,” *El Municipio Libre*, 6 August 1891, 1. Critics of the police were accused of utopianism and “metaphysics”. CITE Hale on “metaphysics” as positivist epithet against more traditional liberals.

⁷³ Quote from: “Boletín,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 31 July 1891, 1.

⁷⁴ Quote from: “A ‘El Municipio Libre’,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 8 August 1891, 1.

Ironically, this statement ignored *El Diario*’s earlier stance against the expansion of the police (see: “El torno del hogar,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 20 April 1882, 1-2).

⁷⁵ Quote from: “Boletín,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 31 July 1891, 1. For earlier, similar arguments, see Manuel G. Prieto’s writings in *El Foro* (discussed earlier in the chapter), and “La policía y la sociedad,” *El Monitor Republicano*, 27 August 1879, 1. The latter was written in response to *El Gendarme*’s article “La sociedad y la policía” (16 and 24 August 1879, 1-2), which decried popular lack of respect for the police.

excuse for inaction, the latter's claims did contain the seeds of an important question that other papers had also asked. Faced with unrelenting police corruption and abuses, which had not been altered either by the (supposedly) extensive reforms of 1879 or by repeated moralization campaigns to remove corrupt gendarmes, could the police problem be resolved through laws and regulations?⁷⁶

The Police Code

This question would soon be put to the test. Porfirian police reform would reach its apotheosis in the 1890s, centering on efforts to create a Police Code. Similar to existing codes (the Penal Code, the Civil Code, the Commercial Code, the Sanitary Code, and the Procedural Codes, which had been introduced over the previous decades), supporters argued that a Police Code would bring clarity to a confusing and at times contradictory legal landscape.⁷⁷ Although a Police Code was never implemented, the push for codification did generate the most significant reforms to policing of the era—a new police regulation, new systems designed to root out corruption and irregularities, and salary changes—that to a large degree built on liberal critiques of the police. However, these reforms were still widely viewed as ineffective, and their failure revealed the limits of liberal police reform.

Calls for reform increasingly cohered around calls in the press for a Police Code in the 1890s. Throughout 1891, during the debates occasioned by the La Profesa case, *El Nacional* repeatedly called for codification. If the police were too few in number to protect the city, and

⁷⁶ In 1885, *El Tiempo* wondered what use new laws would be if officials already ignored existing laws. “La policía,” *El Tiempo*, 22 September 1885, 2.

⁷⁷ On the logic of legal codes, see: John Henry Merryman, *The Civil Law Tradition: An Introduction to the Legal Systems of Western Europe and Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

lacked knowledge of the many laws and regulations they were supposed to enforce, a Police Code could resolve the problem by requiring better police training and by fixing the number of police as a ratio of the capital's population, ensuring that the size of the corps kept up with urban growth. More than this, the paper recommended codifying the many scattered responsibilities of the police. *El Nacional* made sweeping claims for the efficacy of a Police Code, saying it would put an end to social ills like *vagancia* and drunkenness, prevent crime, and inculcate respect for individual rights throughout society, contributing to Mexico's modernization.⁷⁸ Unsurprisingly, the proposal was dismissed by the pro-government press, *El Municipio Libre* responding that "public order is not maintained and affirmed with words."⁷⁹ And *El Nacional* itself was hardly committed to the idea.⁸⁰ However, the idea of a Police Code would soon be revived.

The most extensive reform project of the decade came from *El Diario del Hogar*. In 1895, it published a five-article series proposing detailed reforms; it was even hailed by some of the paper's ideological opponents as a useful contribution.⁸¹ *El Diario* identified a series of problems and proposed several major reforms. The police were corrupt, violent, and prone to

⁷⁸ The plan was articulated in the following articles in *El Nacional*: "Estudios sociales – La prevención de los delitos," 24 May 1891, 2; "Necesidades sociales – Código de Policía," 14 August 1891, 2; "Necesidades sociales – Código de Policía," 23 August 1891, 2. The last article drew on ideas of racial inheritance to claim that Mexicans' indigenous and Spanish origins predisposed them toward obedience to authority and a sense of justice, arguing that this meant a well-written Police Code would have far-reaching effects.

Perhaps the clearest statement of the hopes behind the paper's call for a Police Code came from 14 August: "Con un buen Código de Policía vendrán la supresión total de la ociosidad y la vagancia; la educación de los huérfanos y de los abandonados; el aprendizaje de artes y oficios por todos aquellos a quienes no cuidan de darlos sus padres; la extinción de la mendicidad; la disminución del pauperismo y de la ebriedad; la cesación de corros en vinaterías y pulquerías; la vigilancia escrupulosa de cantinas y puntos públicos de reunión; la observancia de las prescripciones de higiene pública, y en fin, una acción enérgica é incesante sobre todo, que a todos los ciudadanos obligará al respeto de los derechos de los demás, garantizando así el pleno ejercicio de la libertad de todos."

⁷⁹ F. Martínez Ortíz, "La Policía – su estado presente y lo que haría un Código," *El Municipio Libre*, 20 August 1891, 1.

⁸⁰ In between calls for a Police Code, *El Nacional* briefly reversed course to argue that the police problem was not systemic but individual. "El respeto a la policía," *El Nacional*, 12 August 1891, 2.

⁸¹ Titled "Reformas que la policía necesita," *El Diario del Hogar* published the series on its front page on 30 April, 3 May, 7 May, 10 May, and 14 May 1895. The pro-government paper *La Patria* applauded the series for its seriousness and "originality." "El Diario del Hogar," *La Patria*, 1 May 1895, 3.

abandoning their duties in favor of drinking with friends and patrons, who they showered with favoritism. These abuses were impossible to correct as many police were the clients of powerful officials; even when they were fired, they regained their positions through the influence of their patrons. While there were not enough gendarmes to police the growing city, this was compounded by the detachment of gendarmes as bodyguards—or, *El Diario* alleged, as domestic servants—for government officials. Beyond the problem of such personalistic uses of the police, Policía Secreta agents were widely known in the criminal underworld and thus totally ineffective.

To correct these problems, *El Diario* proposed a series of solutions which, although not explicitly framed as a Police Code, would have required sweeping new regulations similar to those imagined by proponents of codification. It called for banning the detachment of police on separate duties and folding the Policía Secreta into the foot gendarmería, effectively giving the police greater numbers to patrol the city. It also proposed expanding the Inspector General's authority so he could crack down on ineffective and corrupt subordinates. The paper further proposed increased inspections by officials (to catch corrupt or malingering subordinates unaware), and stricter hiring practices to negate the influence of powerful patrons and ensure that all gendarmes were literate, honorable, and physically strong. Paradoxically, *El Diario* sought to reduce police violence by replacing gendarmes' cudgels with machetes, arguing that the more obviously dangerous weapons would make gendarmes and the broader public alike take violence more seriously and thus limit weapons use. Throughout, it justified its proposal with reference to foreign comparisons, especially New York, although the paper stressed adaptation to local conditions over blind imitation. For example, police in New York often were stationed at fixed points for extended periods of time, allowing them to gain useful knowledge of their

surroundings and form bonds of respect with residents. In contrast, *El Diario* wrote, while Mexico City's police were similarly stationed at corner posts, the poor quality of personnel (all but guaranteed by low wages) prevented the formation of useful knowledge and instead promoted favoritism and bribery. The problem of personalistic arbitrariness could be resolved by removing gendarmes from the corrupting influences of local ties by pulling them from the corner and keeping them in motion on patrol.⁸²

Although few wrote in as much depth about the problem of personalism, some of *El Diario*'s proposals were similar to those that were considered by authorities as they promoted more extensive reforms. In 1896, officials instituted a new position, the Visitador de Policía, to carry out inspections of comisariías, delve into irregularities, and propose reforms. The energetic first Visitador, Eduardo Velázquez, introduced changes in administration and structure—most notably introducing the position of Gendarme First Class, with higher wages of 1.5 pesos per day, to incentive better behavior by giving gendarmes a chance at promotion—and also tried to found a police academy to institutionalize police training (which in practice occurred on the job).⁸³ Pro-government and opposition papers alike immediately celebrated Velázquez, seeking to take credit for inspiring the reforms, and took the opportunity to push for other changes.⁸⁴

While *El Diario* reprinted its 1895 proposal with minor changes, pro-government papers sensed which way the wind was blowing and took up the cause of the Police Code.⁸⁵ *El Siglo XIX*

⁸² "Reformas que la policía necesita," *El Diario del Hogar*, 10 May 1895, 1.

⁸³ As Rohlfes notes, the academy does not seem to have ever opened. Rohlfes, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City," 56–58, 93. Velázquez also reduced the security fees that police were charged for their uniforms and weapons.

⁸⁴ *La Patria* applauded Velázquez's reforms. *El Diario del Hogar* celebrated that its reformist stance had been vindicated, while *El Siglo XIX* claimed that pro-government papers had long pushed for similar changes. "Regeneración de la policía," *La Patria*, 15 July 1896, 1; "Reformas que la Policía necesita," *El Diario del Hogar*, 30 May 1896, 1; "Las reformas administrativas y la prensa de oposición," *El Siglo XIX*, 3 June 1896, 1.

⁸⁵ Again titled "Reformas que la policía necesita," the series was published on *El Diario del Hogar*'s front page from 30 May 1896 to 13 June 1896, this time with authorship attributed to one of the paper's editors, Antonio

argued that a Code was necessary to rationalize regulations “that lie forgotten in the archive, and that nobody takes up the charge of enforcing,” and to modernize police organization. Criticizing the traditional broad understanding of *policía* as inefficient in the modern era, *El Siglo XIX* claimed that the fundamental problem of policing was how the institution united different facets that were best separated as they required specialized competencies and procedures. In the modern era, professionalization demanded specialization, so the paper called for the new Code to divide the Gendarmería into three new organizations: a security-focused preventive police, an investigative judicial police, and a “municipal police” to enforce sanitary and commercial regulations.⁸⁶

El Siglo’s support for codification was symptomatic of broader interest by authorities. By mid-1896, a committee led by the Governor of the Federal District and including Velázquez had been convened to draft a Code. Although its initial efforts were halting—an unspecified part of the Code that was submitted in August was not implemented, and in October the committee had to be reshuffled with the change in gubernatorial administrations—the project attracted positive attention.⁸⁷ *La Patria* hoped that the Code would clarify the legality of gendarmes’ use of force against suspects, arguing that violence was necessary for police to defend themselves from armed criminals.⁸⁸ *La Voz de México*, a Catholic paper, celebrated a proposed article the

Albarrán. There were few changes from 1895, and many paragraphs were reprinted word for word. The chief differences were that the later series placed a greater emphasis on the example of New York, and less on increasing the authority of the Inspector General.

⁸⁶ On rationalization, see: “Algo de policía,” *El Siglo XIX*, 17 March 1896, 1. On the proposed division into three separate police, see: “Las reformas administrativas y la prensa de oposición,” *El Siglo XIX*, 3 June 1896, 1. It should be noted that, as early as 1882, *El Diario del Hogar* had similarly argued that it was a mistake to entrust so many divergent duties to a single institution and had called for greater specialization. “El torno del Hogar,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 20 April 1882, 1-2.

⁸⁷ I have not been able to determine exactly when the commission was first convened. For notes on its progress, see: “[Untitled],” *El Foro*, 1 August 1896, 4; “Nueva comisión,” *La Voz de México*, 2 October 1896, 3.

⁸⁸ “Regeneración de la policía,” *La Patria*, 15 July 1896, 1.

commission publicized that would crack down on “decently dressed idlers who improperly flirt with, or in any other manner offend, women.”⁸⁹ The many hopes placed on the Police Code—modernizing organization, clarifying regulations, specifying the legality of police violence, and criminalizing unseemly flirtations—spoke to how the sheer breadth of police activities and the scope of the police problem left the main thrust of the codification project somewhat vague.

As a preliminary step, the commission chose to replace the still-in-force 1872 Regulation on police duties. In February 1897, authorities issued a new Regulation of the Obligations of the Gendarme (*Reglamento de las obligaciones del gendarme*, henceforth referred to as the 1897 Regulation).⁹⁰ The commission noted that it was merely part of a broader project, but argued that the new regulation was needed to “put in the hands of the gendarme a collection of clear and precise prescriptions” that would replace confusing earlier regulations.⁹¹ Indeed, the 1897 Regulation said nothing about organization, personnel requirements for recruits, or salaries—major themes of reform discourse—but instead dealt entirely with police practices.

Despite the pressures that had accumulated on police reform, the 1897 Regulation made only minor changes. Much as with the 1872 Regulation, it largely ignored criminal investigation in favor of public order concerns. One entire chapter (out of five in total) was devoted to keeping public streets and sidewalks clear, and another chapter on municipal and sanitary regulations

⁸⁹ The proposed article in question read: “Los holgazanes decentemente vestidos que galanteen impropiamente, o de cualquier modo ofendan a las señoras, se remitirán inmediatamente a la oficina, sin admitirles excusas ni ofrecimiento de que se presentarán después.” *La Voz* applauded it as necessary in the face of “los desmanes de esos Tenorios atrevidos y tontos”, whose crassness “desdice mucho de una sociedad que se tiene por culta y educada.” “Buena disposición,” *La Voz de México*, 20 October 1896, 2. On the figure of “Don Juan Tenorio,” see: Buffington, *A Sentimental Education*, chap. 5.

⁹⁰ Reproduced in: Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 27, 75-83. There was some confusion on the part of the press: the *Semana Mercantil*, for instance, misidentified the Regulation as the Police Code. [Untitled], *Semana Mercantil*, 4 January 1897, 13.

⁹¹ The introductory remarks were included in *El Municipio Libre*’s publication of the regulation. “Reglamento de las obligaciones del gendarme,” *El Municipio Libre*, 28 February 1897, 1.

emphasized maintaining streetlights, keeping streets and buildings clean, and enforcing quality control measures for foodstuffs.⁹² The 1897 Regulation stressed that gendarmes were to be vigilant and dispassionate in their duties, rules that hardly changed from 1872.⁹³ There were few novelties. While the Regulation kept police at their corner posts, as before, it now also ordered them to carry out a brief patrol of their surroundings every half hour—although if *El Diario* had called for patrols as a means of preventing personalism, the new regulation’s patrols were clearly intended more to improve police presence beyond corners.⁹⁴ As in earlier regulations, broad police discretion was built into the 1897 Regulation. Gendarmes were to especially keep an eye on certain people and spaces, including known rateros, package carriers, brothels, pulquerías, and any person or space that “inspires suspicion, appears dangerous or inconvenient, or in any way disturbs the public.”⁹⁵ It also empowered police to immediately arrest a wide range of people for various offenses: “scandalous drunks” who disturbed the public, prostitutes who walked the streets, and any person who could be “presumed with reason” to have committed a crime.⁹⁶ Gendarmes retained broad arrest power, although the Regulation encouraged constraint through giving out warnings before resorting to arrest in cases of less serious crimes.⁹⁷

Although initially applauded—*El Correo Español*, for instance, optimistically reported that the committee had at long last “succeeded in moralizing the gendarme corps and all those

⁹² Chapter III was titled “Deberes del gendarme para conservar expedita la vía pública,” while Chapter V was “De las disposiciones municipales y sanitarias.”

⁹³ Police were instructed to be “atento y cortés, moderado y decente en su lenguaje” (Art. 1), and to be “moderado en sus mandatos, sereno en el peligro y severamente enérgico, frío é impasible, inalterable por la actitud hostil de los infractores o delincuentes” (Art. 2). They were further told to exercise morality in their private lives and avoid unwise debts (Art. 3).

⁹⁴ 1897 Regulation, Art. 28-29.

⁹⁵ 1897 Regulation, Art. 38.

⁹⁶ 1897 Regulation, Art. 57.

⁹⁷ Gendarmes were to give those who publicly uttered obscenities a warning (Art. 48), and were to warn and physically separate people who were arguing before matters devolved into blows (Art. 51). In both cases, they were to simply arrest the offenders if they continued.

people that commit violations meriting correction”—the 1897 Regulation’s profound limitations quickly became apparent.⁹⁸ While it may have condensed and clarified gendarmes’ duties, it did nothing to improve the oft-noted problems of inept and insufficient personnel, corruption and arbitrariness, or violence. Less than a month after being issued, the pro-government paper *La Patria* bluntly stated that “the police Regulation is good, but the gendarmes do not understand it,” conveniently displacing blame for the failure onto individual police.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, codification efforts came to a sudden halt in a shocking scandal. Velázquez, one of the driving forces behind the project, had been promoted from Visitador to Inspector General in recognition of his energetic reformism.¹⁰⁰ But his rising star abruptly fizzled out in strange circumstances. In 1897, while in jail awaiting trial for attempting to assassinate Porfirio Díaz, Arnulfo Arroyo was “lynched” by what appeared to be an urban rabble, but what was soon discovered to be a group of plainclothes police. Velázquez was implicated and imprisoned, suspiciously dying of apparent suicide in his cell. The scandal highlighted the complicity of the police in political repression and raised uncomfortable questions about whether Arroyo and Velázquez had been killed to cover up the involvement of well-placed conspirators.¹⁰¹ In any case, with Velázquez dead, the codification drive stalled.

⁹⁸ “Reglamento de las obligaciones del gendarme,” *El Correo Español*, 25 February 1897, 2. “[...] ha procurado moralizar al cuerpo de la gendarmería y a todas aquellas personas que cometan faltas que ameriten corrección.”

⁹⁹ “El reglamento de policía – Infracción de las Leyes de Reforma,” *La Patria*, 13 March 1897. The paper charged the police with being “vulgar, and believing that some infractions of the law were natural.”

¹⁰⁰ One article obliquely notes the continuing work of the committee, and Velázquez’s role in it, in mid-1897. “La renuncia del Inspector General de Policía,” *La Patria*, 18 July 1897, 3.

¹⁰¹ The case has received substantial attention; see, for example: Garza, *The Imagined Underworld*, chap. 6; Barrera Bassols, *El caso Villavicencio*, 44–48, 54–93; Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 59–64.

Authorities made further attempts at a Police Code, but none bore fruit. In 1899, Díaz appointed the jurist Rafael Aguilar to draft a Code, and the press again applauded the effort.¹⁰² However, many argued that any reform that did not improve the quality of personnel was useless.¹⁰³ As the satirical journal *El Chisme* concisely put it, what were needed were “good, pretty, and cheap gendarmes” (*gendarmes buenos, bonitos y baratos*, humorously echoing a common vendors’ call).¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the project was soon quietly abandoned.¹⁰⁵ Authorities convened a third codification committee in 1902—which included the noted criminologist and police official Carlos Roumagnac—but the attempt once again came to nothing.¹⁰⁶ By the last months of the Porfirian regime, papers continued to call for a Police Code, still to no avail.¹⁰⁷

The reason for the codification effort’s failure is opaque, but several possibilities may be suggested. The sheer scope of police work perhaps made codification difficult under the best of circumstances. Budgetary constraints likely played a major role in preventing the significant wage increases and other changes that observers regularly claimed were necessary: although the police budget did increase significantly over the Porfiriato, most of that simply went into expanding the number of police.¹⁰⁸ It is perhaps significant that the impetus for police codification came from the police themselves—especially Velázquez—and the press. Unlike other legal codes, which received substantial attention from jurists, jurists appear to have played

¹⁰² “El Código de Policía,” *El Popular*, 24 May 1899, 1; “El Universal,” *El Tiempo*, 5 July 1899, 2.

¹⁰³ “La policía, la higiene, y las garantías individuales – ‘El Municipio Libre’,” *El Popular*, 6 July 1899, 1.

¹⁰⁴ “Código de Policía,” *El Chisme*, 20 May 1899, 3. “Si, entre tanto, el Señor Rebollar, pudiera formar unos gendarmes buenos, bonitos y baratos, ya no había más que pedir.”

¹⁰⁵ Aguilar met with the Governor during the summer, and in July sent a table summarizing his (as yet incomplete) proposal to Díaz, who approved of it. Unfortunately, the contents of his proposal are unclear. The project did not proceed further, for unknown reasons. “El Código de Policía,” *La Voz de México*, 17 June 1899, 3; “Conferencia con el Sr. Gobernador,” *El Tiempo*, 21 June 1899, 2.

¹⁰⁶ “De la Capital,” *El Correo Español*, 18 November 1902, 2.

¹⁰⁷ “Lo que dice la estadística – Guarismos que sonrojan,” *La Iberia*, 2 February 1911, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Rohlfes notes that the police budget quadrupled from 1879 to 1909, and the vast majority of funds went into expanding the force. Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 76, 100.

a minimal role in the project (except perhaps for the abortive 1899 effort) and took little interest in carrying out codification.¹⁰⁹ Given the bursts of positive press coverage that surrounded each project, and the only minor regulatory changes introduced in 1897, it seems clear that part of the purpose of codification efforts, quite apart from actually generating successful reforms, was simply to prop up the often-unstable legitimacy of the police—and the careers of police officials—by giving the impression of energetic reformism.¹¹⁰ The simplest answer is that the police were largely seen by political elites as doing what they were supposed to do—they had succeeded in changing foreigners’ perceptions of insecurity in Mexico, and, despite regular police scandals and news of crimes, the upper and middle classes reportedly felt safe, with violence and crime seen as limited to the lower classes.¹¹¹ Less simplistically, regulatory changes—especially the relatively minor changes implemented in the Porfiriato—were simply ill-suited to changing deep-rooted police practices that depended less on laws and regulations than on broad discretionary authority.

Beyond the 1897 Regulations, and Velázquez’s reforms, changes were few and far between in the era. Around the turn of the century, a network of telegraphic alarm boxes was

¹⁰⁹ Juridical journals barely mentioned police codification, or only did so in passing. *El Foro*, for instance, only briefly noted the 1896-1897 codification effort. [untitled], *El Foro*, 1 August 1896, 4; “Hechos diversos,” *El Foro*, 29 September 1896, 3.

¹¹⁰ Something similar was likely at play when, in the early 1900s, Inspector General Félix Díaz (nephew of the president) conducted an official visit to Chile, ostensibly to learn how Chilean police had been reformed by a visiting Parisian police official. Despite being promoted as a means of modernizing the police, the trip does not appear to have generated any particular reforms; at the very least, the official police journal made no mention of any. Díaz’s official visit to Chile is noted in: “La policía,” *Gaceta de Policía*, 26 November 1905, 2. The trip may have been intended more to strengthen business connections he had likely made earlier as consul in Santiago de Chile. On his being named to the consulship, see: CARSO-CEHM, Fondo DCXXI, Legajo 44, Carpeta 1, Documento 1: Pablo Leandor to Félix Díaz, México, 22 November 1902.

¹¹¹ As the prominent criminologist Miguel Macedo argued, the upper- and middle-class inhabitants of the city lived in a bubble, believing themselves to have perfect security, while shocking rates of crime and violence permeated the lower and working classes. Miguel Macedo, *La criminalidad en México: medios de combatirla* (México: Oficina Tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1897), 4, 6–7.

installed in the city's central zones, and the first purpose-built comisaría was constructed in 1906 (although most comisarías continued to be located in rented buildings with often-poor conditions).¹¹² Despite these developments, and the general expansion of the size of the police force, the Gendarmería looked much the same in 1879 as in 1910 in terms of organization, training, and police practices. The most important change in policing during the Porfiriato was not in organization, but in an expansion of police authority. As historians like Pablo Piccato have discussed, in response to widespread perceptions of worsening crime, a series of legal changes from 1894 to 1908 intended to combat theft increasingly allowed suspects in cases of petty crime and minor offenses (known as *rateros*) to be punished not through the courts, but by administrative authorities—either police officials or city authorities—and the police increasingly carried out *razzias* (raids or sweeps) where they simply rounded up large numbers of suspects, many of whom were summarily sentenced to banishment to the Islas Marías penal colony. Although a clear violation of suspects' procedural rights to a fair trial, the reforms were justified as urgently necessary in the face of insecurity.¹¹³

Given their dismal results in producing institutional reforms, it would be easy to dismiss Porfirian writings on the police problem as much ado about nothing. Yet they are worth discussing. The liberal opposition, especially, established framings for understanding and critiquing policing that would shape future reform efforts. In this framing, the police were ineffective, abusive, corrupt, and arbitrary, and correcting these problems required

¹¹² Rohlfes, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City," 92; Pulido Esteva, "Trabajo, clase y prácticas policiales en las comisarías de la ciudad de México, 1870-1920," 695; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 42.

¹¹³ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 167–71; Pulido Esteva, *Las Islas Marías*, 65–74. Although this was not a major change conceptually—the police had always had a great deal of discretionary power to make arrests, including, as discussed in the previous chapter, of people who were simply "suspicious"—the scale differed, as thousands were arrested in this way per year by the late Porfiriato.

professionalization to turn police into dispassionate enforcers of the law who could effectively modernize the city. These ideas circulated widely, especially among the politicians who would soon see a chance for reforms in the wake of the Mexican Revolution. At the same time, the failure of widespread criticism to effectively blunt the legitimacy of the idea of professional policing—which continued to be seen as necessary—points to how deeply rooted the idea of policing as a modern urban public service had become. Despite its acknowledged failure to address the police problem during the Porfiriato (or, indeed, later), liberal reformism would ultimately dominate debates over policing.

The Revolution and Beyond

If the Porfiriato saw the rise of a stable discourse on the police problem coupled with an inability to effect reforms, the Revolution seemed to offer the possibility of deeper change. This was not because policing was a major preoccupation of the revolutionaries—it was not. But the political space afforded by the Revolution, especially as the police were commonly identified as representative of the old regime, granted space for rethinking policing, especially as the police force dwindled during the chaos of the conflict.¹¹⁴ This was apparent even early on, as shown by proposals that Madero received for police reform. Some proposals sought to use police to promote national development in an expansion on Porfirian models, like one that called for a *Policía de Educación y de Enseñanza* to collect detailed information on the urban poor, to ensure

¹¹⁴ Diane E. Davis, “Policing and Populism in the Cárdenas and Echeverría Administrations,” in *Populism in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, ed. Amelia M. Kiddle and María L.O. Muñoz (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010), 138–39; Diane E. Davis, “Policing and Regime Transition: From Postauthoritarianism to Populism to Neoliberalism,” in *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*, ed. Wil G. Pansters (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 71–73; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 140–42. On Mexico City during the Revolution, see: Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, *Historia del desasosiego: la revolución en la Ciudad de México, 1911-1922* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2010), chaps. 3–4.

that their children attended school, and to crack down on the wearing of indigenous clothing and (the proposal implied) the drinking of pulque.¹¹⁵ Others took a different tack. One bizarre, rambling proposal called for replacing the police (and military) with a national gendarmería (and national guard) in which all citizens would be required to serve, reminiscent of early residential policing systems, which was presented as an essential aspect of creating a utopian “continual Paradise” in Mexico.¹¹⁶ Revolutionaries at times offered more radical visions, as well. The newspaper *Regeneración*, for instance, had begun with fairly typical liberal critiques of the police as ineffective and abusive, but as its editors shifted to anarchism by the late Porfiriato, the paper came to identify the police as one of many forces propping up unjust systems like private land ownership.¹¹⁷ This marked, albeit incipiently, a serious change: if liberal framings were premised on the police as a means of attaining order and justice, with problems due to their failure to live up to their aims, *Regeneración* instead suggested that the liberal model was itself unjust. However, despite giving space for more radical critiques, the Revolution’s legacy on policing would be more traditional. Authorities and most observers doubled down on the preoccupations and prescriptions of liberal police reformism. Although reforms went much

¹¹⁵ AGN, Archivos Presidenciales, Francisco I. Madero, Caja 011, Exp. 270-1: “Proyecto de creación y organización de una oficina general de beneficencia e instrucción para la regeneración del pueblo,” 24 October 1911. On pulque and indigenous clothing, see: p. 13-14, n4. The proposal came from the prominent doctor Rafael Garza Cantú.

¹¹⁶ AGN, Archivos Presidenciales, Francisco I. Madero, Caja 032, Exp. 869-1: Letters from Estanislao de Prida. The project of an original mind, to say the least, Prida’s proposal included everything from the establishment of “Asilos” to provide food, shelter, and education to every citizen under age 25, to the implementation of a four-hour workday, to infrastructural investment, to the use of the national guard to hunt wild game to feed rural pueblos, to naval modernization.

¹¹⁷ For early writings, see: “El culto de la linterna,” *Regeneración*, 7 November 1900, 11; “La seguridad en la república,” *Regeneración*, 23 February 1901, 8-9; 28 February 1901, 12-13; 7 March 1901, 9-10; 15 March 1901, 9-10; “Salvajismo policíaco,” 30 April 1901, 8-9. For later writings, see: “Tierra,” *Regeneración*, 1 October 1910, 1. It should be noted that, while policing and security were fairly frequent topics of discussion early on, the paper discussed them less and less often after its shift to anarchism. *Regeneración* and its editors, the Flores Magón brothers, have received extensive scholarly attention. See, for example: Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2014).

farther than they had under the Porfiriato, substantially reshaping policing in certain aspects, they were never seen as sufficient to change perceptions of reigning abusiveness, inefficacy, and corruption.

Most political challenges to the police in the wake of the Revolution met with little success. In the early 1920s, for instance, members of the Labor Party—closely tied to the CROM and Obregón—challenged the police with some regularity, but to minimal effect and with little coordination. The Laborist Federal District Governor Celestino Gasca clashed repeatedly with Jefe de Policía Jesús Almada over the police’s authority to arrest and effectively sentence suspected *rateros* without judicial or gubernatorial intervention. However, Almada counted on Obregón’s support, while the press heavily criticized Gasca for purportedly being soft on crime.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, congressional debates over the police budget in 1922 were particularly tense, as the budget—written by Gasca’s Federal District government—proposed a dramatic increase in the size of the Gendarmería and in police salaries. Opposing the budget, a number of Laborists and allies denounced the police not only as ineffectual and abusive, but as tools of capitalist interests.¹¹⁹ The Laborist deputy Julián S. González asked if the gendarmería would truly benefit “the *pueblo obrero*, the working people” of the capital, or if it would only benefit “the bourgeoisie, the old aristocracy of Mexico City, which needs these police for the defense of their interests and lives,” and others agreed that the working classes gained little if anything from

¹¹⁸ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 173–74; Pulido Esteva, *Las Islas Marias*, 75–76. For examples of articles attacking Gasca, see: “Despierte Ud. Sr. Gobernador,” *Excelsior*, 19 November 1921, 3; “La policía de esta ciudad ha sido ya provista de armas,” *Excelsior*, 22 November 1921, Second Section, 1.

¹¹⁹ Besides the example below, José de la Luz Mena Alcocer also claimed that the police merely defended the interests of the wealthy. “La ley de amnistía quedó aprobada aye ren la cámara de diputados,” *El Demócrata*, 30 November 1922.

policing.¹²⁰ However, their critiques proved toothless. González himself eventually admitted that he was in favor of increasing the size of the force, and he opposed the budget mostly because he thought it irresponsible to raise gendarmes' wages while the country was in dire economic straits. The budget ultimately passed by a large majority, 117-21, with most deputies arguing that more and better-paid police were necessary to combat corruption and improve efficacy.¹²¹ As the debates highlight, the underlying logic of liberal police reform—that policing was necessary for order, and that professionalization would prevent abuses—was barely materially challenged by more radical critiques.¹²²

There were several reasons for the postrevolutionary dominance of liberal police reform discourse over alternatives. As has often been pointed out, politicians needed the police in part for political repression in an era of increasingly tumultuous politics. In the face of mass political mobilization and often violent political contests, the police were vital for cracking down on

¹²⁰ *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados [DDCD]* No. 63, 29 November 1922. González's full quote: "[...] cree usted que el aumento en las plazas de la Policía y el aumento de sueldo de esa misma Policía, beneficiaría a la postre al pueblo obrero, al pueblo laborante de la ciudad de México? ¿No cree usted que únicamente ese aumento de la Policía y del sueldo de la misma, beneficiaría a la burguesía, a la vieja aristocracia de la ciudad de México, que necesita de estos policías para que cuide sus intereses y sus vidas?" Deputy José Siurob agreed that the police likely did little to help the working classes, who he (rather absurdly) argued were too poor to be targeted by thieves.

¹²¹ *DDCD* No. 63, 29 November 1922.

¹²² Even political groups on the margins of power offered relatively little space for systemic critique of policing, tending to avoid discussion of security issues. Instead, when radical political organizations denounced policing, they invariably focused on the political repression of dissidents. For example, the official communist newspaper *El Machete* seems to have rarely criticized the police, except—most notably—after police suppressed communist-organized protests against the arrival of Leon Trotsky in Mexico. "Brutal atropello," *El Machete*, 16 January 1937, 1.

Mexico was not entirely unique. As Juandrea Bates has noted, working-class socialist and anarchist newspapers in Buenos Aires originally wrote supportively about a 1920 international police conference hosted in the city, hoping that delegates would increase the number of police in relatively underpoliced working-class neighborhoods. This built on efforts to challenge elites' association of the working classes with criminality, with radical papers instead arguing that equal access to security was vital for citizenship. However, once it became clear that delegates were more interested in police cooperation to repress labor movements, the radical papers turned against the conference. Juandrea Bates, "Visions of Order: Criminality, Class, and Community Conceptions of the Police in 1920s Buenos Aires," in *Voices of Crime: Constructing and Contesting Social Control in Modern Latin America*, ed. Luz E. Huertas, Bonnie A. Lucero, and Gregory J. Swedberg (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2016), 151–53.

political opponents and carrying out electoral fraud.¹²³ Yet the more prosaic reason was simply that politicians of all stripes had few other means of responding to crime. Perceptions of insecurity rose dramatically during the severe disruptions of the Revolution and continued for long afterward, even as crime statistics eventually declined.¹²⁴ Many postrevolutionary criminologists viewed economic deprivation as a cause of crime, and called for economic and social development as a means of decreasing crime at the same time as they hoped prisons could be made regenerative and legal reforms could protect the working class. However, these were seen as long-term solutions at best with little applicability in the short run, and policing remained vital in their view for dealing with crime.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, capitalinos continued to petition during and after the Revolution for improved police service, especially along the urban periphery.¹²⁶ Alongside long-standing

¹²³ Davis, "Policing and Regime Transition," 73–74; Ponce Hernández, "La gestión de un nuevo orden," 115–16. In the wake of the violent November 1922 water riot against the Ayuntamiento, many alleged that the Laborists, who controlled the Federal District government, had held the police back from stopping the riot because the city council was controlled by their political opponents. On the water riot, see: Rodríguez Kuri, *Historia del desasosiego*, 194–204.

¹²⁴ Piccato, *City of Suspects*; Piccato, *A History of Infamy*.

¹²⁵ See, for instance, the 1939 effort to give workers better access to libertad bajo caución: "Los beneficios de la libertad bajo caución," *El Nacional*, 14 May 1939. The most prominent criminological study of the 1930s called, in part, for shortening the workday and raising workers' wages as means of combatting alcoholism and thus preventing crime: Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón, José Gómez Robleda, and Benjamín Argüelles Martínez, *Tendencia y ritmo de la criminalidad en México, D.F.* (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Estadísticas, 1939), 133–34. For midcentury examples of criminologists' calls for social reforms, see: Juan José González Bustamante, "La delincuencia femenina," *Estudios Sociológicos*, 1952, 281–93; Antonio de P. Moreno, "Los grupos sociales en la delincuencia," *Estudios Sociológicos*, 1952, 61–116; Raúl Carrancá y Trujillo, "Vicios sociales y criminalidad," *Estudios Sociológicos*, 1952, 23–29; Victoria Kent, "Prostitución," *Estudios Sociológicos*, 1950, 121–29; Desiderio Graue Díaz González, "Prostitución en la Ciudad de México," *Estudios Sociológicos*, 1950, 131–59. In any case, many criminologists also continued to hold to ideas of atavistic inherent criminality that further justified strong state action. Urías Horcasitas, *Historias secretas del racismo*; Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico*, chap. 7.

¹²⁶ Besides the examples discussed below, see, for example: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 374, Exp. 36: Petition of 18 October 1916 from sixteen residents of Tacubaya (Velazquez de León street) requesting improved police service in response to rising crime; *Ibid.*, Caja 397, Exp. 15: Petition of 20 January 1926 from residents of Tacubaya (General Cano street) requesting police service in response to criminal gangs; AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 119: Petition of 22 June 1925 by "vecinos unos y otros propietarios de terrenos" of the Fraccionamiento de los Ranchos de la Viga y Magdalena.

framings that positioned policing as a crucial modern urban service, some residents also added more expressly revolutionary rhetoric. In a typical example from 1915, some eighty-two residents (by their admission a mix of property owners and renters) of Colonia Vallejo in the north wrote to the Mexico City Ayuntamiento to demand improved services, including policing, which they said they completely lacked despite their neighborhood having grown to a population of 5,000 in the decade since its founding. They framed their demands as in line with the city council's purported defense of "the interests and rights of the people" and its actions against those who exploited "the misery of the humble class". The petition ultimately failed, but exemplified how petitioners increasingly employed revolutionary rhetoric that linked policing to the interests of the lower and working classes.¹²⁷ In 1921, residents of Colonia Daniel Garza—a poorly-serviced area in Tacubaya widely considered working-class—complained that, while their neighborhood had always lacked police and lighting, rising crime made the provision of these services urgent. Practically every night, roving gangs of criminals held up pedestrians and broke into homes; few crimes were reported, as residents lived in mortal fear of reprisal. Although the letter avoided any direct revolutionary rhetoric, instead framing police as necessary for "the wellbeing of the inhabitants of this city" more generally, it indirectly framed the petitioners as

¹²⁷ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colonias, Vol. 520, Exp. 58: Petition of 25 March 1915 (and following documentation). The petition referred to "la alta misión de regeneración, reorganización y progreso" of the Ayuntamiento, and celebrated how it had defended "los intereses y derechos del pueblo" by providing public services and acting against "los explotadores del hambre, de la miseria de la clase humilde". The petition failed, ostensibly because Colonia Vallejo was not in Mexico City's jurisdiction.

City authorities, who especially during the Revolution counted on serious shortages of resources, often turned down such requests. Unsurprisingly, petitioners often turned to intermediaries—residents from Colonia Peralvillo complained their colonia's development company, which in turn demanded services from the city government. In this case, after the Foot Gendarmería proved too short-staffed to patrol the colonia, authorities instead ordered the mounted police to the neighborhood. AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Secretaría, Comisarias, Caja 4, Exp. 233: Communications of 20 October 1915 and onward.

On the shortage of police during the Revolution, see: *Ibid.*, Caja 5, Exp. 272: Communication of 21 March 1916 on the insufficient number of police assigned to the 2a Comisaría. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 140–42.

acting in defense of the lower and working classes, noting that the most common victims were vecinos who “for reason of their occupations have the need to transit the solitary and dark streets of this Colonia”.¹²⁸ And it was not just the working classes who lacked police protection—the residents of new middle class neighborhoods, like Colonia Roma Sur, also petitioned for service.¹²⁹

Petitions for policing became all the more frequent as Mexico City continued to expand faster than authorities could provide access to public services, including security, especially as the city police force grew little in size after the late 1920s, topping out around 5,000 police.¹³⁰ Newspapers and officials regularly stated that the police were insufficient in number to patrol the growing city. If, in 1925, *El Globo* warned that it was impossible for the roughly 1,000 gendarmes on duty at any given time to cover the city’s estimated 3,000 street corners, by 1947 the Jefe de Policía claimed that there were still only about 1,000 police on duty per shift to cover 12,000 corners, and other sources from the 1940s claimed the true size of the city was closer to 50,000 corners.¹³¹ As police continued to be posted in the greatest numbers in the city center,

¹²⁸ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 382, Exp. 36: Petition of 23 October 1921. Full quotes: “esperando de su celo por el bienestar de los habitantes de esta ciudad, se digno tomar las medidas que a bien tenga para librarnos de la plaga que nos aflige”; “pues casi no hay noche que no se registre un asalto a personas solas que por razón de sus ocupaciones tienen necesidad de transitar por las solitarias y oscuras calles de ésta Colonia, para llegar a sus domicilios.” The petition was signed by seventeen people, mostly men, but noted that many other residents would have signed but “por sus ocupaciones no han tenido tiempo de firmar”. On Colonia Daniel Garza’s class association and lack of services: Miranda Pacheco, *Tacubaya*, 203.

¹²⁹ AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 89: Petition of 24 May 1925.

¹³⁰ On the size of the postrevolutionary police force, see: Pulido Esteva, “Los gendarmes”; Ponce Hernández, “La gestión de un nuevo orden,” 71; Martín Gabriel Barrón Cruz, *Policía y seguridad en México* (México: Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Penales, 2005), 191; Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Atlas general del Distrito Federal: geográfico, histórico, comercial, estadístico, agrario* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1930), Vol. I, 66; Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Memoria del Departamento del Distrito Federal, presentada por el C. jefe del mismo, al H. Congreso de la Unión, del 1o de septiembre de 1934, al 31 de agosto de 1935* (México: Talleres Linotipográficos del Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1935), 166.

¹³¹ “La falta de policía garantiza la delincuencia,” *El Globo*, 28 January 1925, 1-2; AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 571, Exp. 545.22/16: Jefe de Policía informe cited in letter of 15 October 1947; “Buen servicio de

residents of peripheral neighborhoods regularly complained of limited service.¹³² In 1935, residents of Colonia Romero Rubio, on the city's east, framed themselves as *humildes* (humble or poor people) in need of protection. As the two police posted in their neighborhood were wholly insufficient, they requested that authorities send a detachment of mounted Gendarmes.¹³³ Their plea likely fell on deaf ears, as they wrote again in 1941.¹³⁴ In 1943, the Comité Directivo of Colonia Revolución (a *colonia proletaria* just northeast of Romero Rubio) wrote to authorities to demand security after a series of robberies. Noting that previous complaints had led to the brief posting of two mounted police who were quickly withdrawn, the committee instead proposed taking a plot of land that had been set aside for a school and turning it into a police station to host a more permanent police presence.¹³⁵ As such sources suggest, public security was as unevenly distributed as any other public service in the fast-growing city.

Finally, the police were widely criticized for abuses and corruption, if anything even more so than they had been during the Porfiriato, making the need for reform all the more visible. As Pablo Piccato has noted, questions and security and public order were widely discussed in the press, largely from a middle-class conservative perspective that was broadly

vigilancia,” *El Universal*, 4 August 1940; “Sección Editorial—La reorganización de la policía,” *El Universal*, 5 February 1941.

¹³² In 1930, *Excélsior* noted in a report on access to public services that the central parts of the city had good access to police (at least compared to their uneven access to other services), but that police were seriously lacking in new colonias. “México carece de los servicios inherentes a una ciudad moderna,” *Excélsior*, 1 June 1930, 2.

¹³³ AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 359, Exp. 418.2/41: Petition of 22 September 1935 (copied 9 November 1935).

¹³⁴ AGN, Manuel Ávila Camacho, Caja 374, Exp. 417.6/2: Petition of 7 January 1941. Unfortunately, the document does not contain the original petition, only a brief extract.

¹³⁵ AGN, Manuel Ávila Camacho, Caja 1023, Exp. 609/571: Petition of 22 October 1943. Unfortunately, the document itself does not allow for a deeper reading of the internal politics of Colonia Revolución. It is entirely possible that the proposal to use the school lot was in some way related to internal conflicts between residential organizations. On internal conflicts within colonias proletarias, see: de Antuñano, “Planning a ‘Mass City,’” 153–60, 246–54; Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, 171–75, 182–90.

critical of police and judicial authorities (if not usually of the federal government itself).¹³⁶

Authorities were regularly informed by the press, by letters, and by internal reports of irregularities and abuses, ranging from the relatively petty, such as officials shirking their duties in favor of four-hour lunch breaks or gendarmes drinking pulque on duty, to more serious allegations of refusal to pay for services, extortion, illegal arrest, theft, and torture.¹³⁷ In 1922, an internal investigation found that two agents in the Comisiones de Seguridad (the successor to the plainclothes Policía Secreta) had in fact been notorious criminals in the Porfiriato and continued to carry out murders.¹³⁸ The press, too, regularly reported on quotidian police abuses. Police corruption and incompetence were frequent topics; *El Universal Gráfico* described city residents as stuck between rapacious criminals, on one hand, and crooked police who extorted, made

¹³⁶ As Piccato has noted, the public sphere expanded significantly after the Revolution. Most newspapers—including the industrial press (papers like *El Universal* and *Excelsior*) and the popular tabloids of the *nota roja* (such as *La Prensa*) tended to take a broadly conservative editorial line, although this was hardly consistently followed. Although authorities imposed censorship in direct and indirect ways, questions of security were particularly open to public discussion. Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, chap. 2; Piccato, “Notes for a History of the Press in Mexico,” 45–55; Smith, *The Mexican Press and Civil Society*.

¹³⁷ For an early letter to Carrancista authorities requesting better oversight of the police, see: CARSO-CEHM, Fondo XXI, Legajo 5915, Carpeta 53, Documento 1: Letter of 30 September 1915.

Allegations of abuses were common, repetitive, and are especially prevalent in the following sections in the AHCM: Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Secretaría, Comisarías (particularly in Caja 5, with documents going to 1917), and Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia (mostly in and around 1925). For examples of officials leaving for lunch and failing to return, see: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Secretaría, Comisarías, Caja 4, Exp. 244: Report of 10 December 1915. On gendarmes drinking on duty, see: Ibid, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 23: Report by Sub-Jefe of 6 February 1925. On an assortment of allegations including (among many others) petty corruption, irregular hiring practices, refusal to pay for service, theft, see: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Secretaría, Comisarías, Caja 5, Exp. 278: Complaints and other matters related to the 8th Demarcación, May-December 1916. On allegations of abuse, torture, and theft, committed against Alfonso Reyna: AHCM, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 24: Letter from Alfonso Reyna of 6 February 1925.

For a few examples of later such allegations, see: AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 357, Exp. 417/13 (petition by 400 police of 20 June 1935 complaining of corruption in the corps); AGN, Manuel Ávila Camacho, Caja 1125, Exp. 703.4/88 (charges of bribery and irregularities, 1943 and 1945); AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 401, Exp. 444.92/77 (accusations of baseless arrest and regular police harassment, 1948).

¹³⁸ Ibid., Caja 1, Exp. 7: Memorandum of 29 March 1922. The investigation alleged that the agents had been accomplices of José de Jesús Negrete Medina (known as “El Tigre de Santa Julia”) and another bandit known as Regato. See also: Pulido Esteva, “Gendarmes, inspectores y comisarios,” 44.

wrongful arrests, and failed to pursue real lawbreakers, on the other.¹³⁹ In one revealing incident in 1924, a gendarme mistook a private security guard for a thief and killed him, then fled the scene when he realized his mistake. Witnesses, fearing reprisal, failed to report the murder, but another gendarme soon attempted to extort the witnesses, enraging them such that they reported both police. As *El Demócrata* wrote, “Result: one gendarme a murderer, and another a swindler. How are the police!”¹⁴⁰ Higher officials such as comisarios and other members of the police bureaucracy were also regularly denounced for abuses.¹⁴¹ Arbitrariness, rather than respect for law, seemed to reign at all levels of the institution: while higher officials were accused of tolerating drug trafficking and crime in return for payoffs, gendarmes were accused of drinking on duty, receiving bribes in return for lax enforcement of laws and regulations, and extorting those around them.¹⁴²

Faced with a seemingly perpetual legitimacy crisis and ceaseless demands for service, officials repeatedly promoted reform, drawing on ideas and rhetoric that had been forged in the Porfiriato. As shown in the following pages, which are largely thematic rather than chronological, authorities implemented a series of police reform projects from the late 1910s

¹³⁹ “Por un lado los rateros, y por otro los gendarmes sin vergüenza, desvalijan al prójimo,” *El Universal Gráfico*, 30 January 1925, 7. After a gendarme shot his doorman when the latter requested payment, *El Demócrata* described him as (in the words of the article’s title) “Un gendarme como hay muchos.” *El Demócrata*, 27 December 1921, 11. After a gendarme shot his former lover then committed suicide, the paper titled its writeup “Para que sirven las pistolas a los gendarmes,” criticizing the arming of the police. *El Demócrata*, 5 April 1923, 5. The paper also noted incidents such as one where police shot and injured a man for no apparent reason in the Plazuela de Mixcalco just northwest of the city center. “Herido por un gendarme,” *El Demócrata*, 19 August 1923, 15.

¹⁴⁰ “Confundiendo a un velador con un ladrón un gendarme le dió muerte disparándole un tiro,” *El Demócrata*, 10 June 1924, 4. “Resultado: un gendarme asesino y otro estafador. ¡Cómo está la policía!”

¹⁴¹ However, accusing a higher official was a rather more serious matter than accusing a low-ranking gendarme, and many of these denunciations were rather vague (both on who had committed the abuses and what they consisted of). For an example that was more specific than most, see: “Las inmoralidades de los Jefes de Policía,” *El Sol*, 29 January 1925, 11.

¹⁴² For several examples, see: “La moralización de la policía,” *El Globo*, 10 February 1925, 5; “El dedo en la llaga,” *Excelsior*, 25 April 1940; Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, “Fue, es y será – Algo más sobre el servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 26 March 1942.

onward. They created new police forces, improved training, sought to inculcate military discipline, tried to modernize police technology, and embarked on practically unending “moralization” campaigns. Much more than Porfirian attempts, these efforts did reshape policing, albeit unevenly. However, they also further entrenched abuses and corruption into the fabric of policing.

Institutional Reforms

Institutional reforms were frequent in the post-revolutionary era. While some, such as the 1929 replacement of the Inspección General de Policía with the Jefatura de Policía (and concurrently the replacement of the Inspector General de Policía with the Jefe de Policía), were little more than name changes, others purported to go deeper. For example, in 1928, authorities announced the definitive closure of the Inspección General’s basement holding cells, notorious as the sites of illegal and arbitrary detention, a practice they claimed was “an anachronism in the middle of a civilized city.”¹⁴³ But illegal detentions continued: as it turned out, it was entirely possible to hold unfortunate suspects incommunicado (and, at times, subject them to torture) in empty offices, out-of-order elevators, or simply on the rooftop of police headquarters, or in other sites like El Pocito station or the Sixth Delegación.¹⁴⁴ Other reforms announced reorganizations

¹⁴³ Quote from: “Ya no habrá ‘sótanos,’ tampoco habrá incomunicación,” *Excelsior*, 1 August 1928, 1. See also: “No habrá más careceles que la penitenciaría y Belén,” *El Universal Gráfico*, 1 August 1928; “Un acierto de la Inspección de Policía,” *El Universal*, 2 August 1928.

¹⁴⁴ In late 1932, Leopoldo Támez was detained illegally in several offices of the Jefatura, and briefly in a broken-down elevator, for five days. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2632, Exp. 546887: Los hechos que denuncia el señor Leopoldo Támez, 1933. In 1942, Ramón Flores Padilla was held briefly—but exposed to a cold winter night—on the roof of the Jefatura. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3536, Exp. 630477: 1943, Abuso de Autoridad, Ataques a las Garantías Individuales. On illegal detentions and torture at El Pocito and the 6th Delegación, see: “Sección Editorial – La reorganización de la policía,” *El Universal*, 5 February 1941; “Deficiencias en el servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 26 February 1942.

It should be noted that the *pocito* also referred to a tub used by police for water torture. Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 118. The articles cited above make it clear that they are referring to a physical site.

to improve efficacy, whether that meant shuffling police around the city to adjust their distribution, opening new investigative laboratories, or creating new divisions within the gendarmería—authorities created a new group of police with training in foreign languages, for instance, to cope with growing tourism, and a small corps of police women tasked especially with watching over children and ensuring the order and cleanliness of comisarías.¹⁴⁵

But the more important changes to policing took place beyond the Gendarmería (or the Policía Preventiva, as it was increasingly called), as authorities created new police corps.¹⁴⁶ The 1917 Constitution introduced a strict institutional division within policing between judicial and administrative authorities. Article 21 stipulated that criminal investigation and the arrest of suspects were to be carried out only by the Ministerio Público and, operating under them, the Policía Judicial (judicial police), while only the judiciary could impose sentences. Administrative authorities like the Gendarmería could only impose fines or short arrests, of no more than 36 hours, as punishments for regulatory infractions or for crimes caught in the act.¹⁴⁷ In theory, the new Constitution positioned the Gendarmería as a strictly preventive force. This development owed much to long-standing perceptions of the police problem and how to resolve it, being justified and receiving support in large part because of how it responded to the preoccupations

¹⁴⁵ Miguel Z. Martínez's administrative reforms included redistributing foot police from eighteen companies to twenty to better distribute service around the capital. For a celebratory account, which includes a list of divisions within the Jefatura de Policía (including multiple crime labs and the Grupo de Idiomas y Relaciones Internacionales), see: "La policía de México es excelente," *Excélsior*, 14 October 1941. On the Policía Femenina, see: Fabiola Bailón Vásquez, "El Cuerpo de la Policía Femenil: imágenes y representaciones, Ciudad de México, 1930," *Secuencia*, no. No. 107 (May 2020).

¹⁴⁶ It should be noted that the Gendarmería Municipal was renamed the Policía Preventiva. However, foot police continued to regularly be called "gendarmes" (as shown by court records), and for simplicity's sake I have continued to refer to the Policía Preventiva as the Gendarmería.

¹⁴⁷ The article did allow administrative officials to impose punishments of up to 15 days of arrest if infractors failed to pay their fines.

established in Porfirian discourse on police reform.¹⁴⁸ As discussed above, critics had often pointed to deficiencies in the *Policía Secreta* investigative corps and had proposed greater specialization; even the pro-government *El Siglo XIX* had proposed dividing the police into separate judicial and preventive (as well as municipal) corps.¹⁴⁹ Delegates were aware of the abusiveness of the *Gendarmería* and sought to limit their powers. During the constitutional debates, one delegate explained to his colleagues that the police “in free countries” were divided between preventive and judicial forces. As he argued, Mexico only really had the former (the *gendarmería*) while the latter, the investigative *Policía Secreta*, “has been very poorly-established”. As he argued, the new constitution would entirely reform the latter force, creating a specialized judicial police that could count on legal, procedural, and investigative expertise, while limiting the potential for abuse of authority by other police.¹⁵⁰

Despite these promises, by any measure the creation of the *Policía Judicial* ultimately failed to resolve the police problem. The new corps was viewed positively at first. In 1922 congressional budget debates, for instance, deputies sharply contrasted the corrupt *Gendarmería* with the purportedly effective and modern *Policía Judicial*, which was lauded as “efficient,” “competent,” and “the only constitutional Police”; deputies even called to expand the corps well beyond what the proposed budget called for.¹⁵¹ However, problems became apparent. The

¹⁴⁸ Diane E. Davis has argued that the reform was intended to centralize authority. While it certainly did so, it is important to recognize that it developed out of earlier discussions of police reform. Davis, “Policing and Regime Transition,” 74–75; Davis, “Policing, Regime Change and Democracy,” 12–14.

¹⁴⁹ “Las reformas administrativas y la prensa de oposición,” *El Siglo XIX*, 3 June 1896, 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Diario de los debates del Congreso Constituyente* (México: Secretaría de Cultura; Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, 2016), Vol. II, 452–454 (Session of 5 January 1917). In a typical example elsewhere, one delegate argued against giving administrative officials broad power to determine the legality of political meetings by denouncing the frequency with which police arrested innocents on false charges of *faltas a la policía*. Vol. II, 120–121 (Session of 22 December 1916).

¹⁵¹ *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados* No. 61, 27 November 1922. Quote: “la *Policía Judicial* es la única *Policía* probablemente, no probablemente, sino constitucional.” One deputy said that the *Policía Judicial* was so effective and morally upright, that it was necessary that “se destruyan los perjuicios que hemos tenido desde

Policía Judicial was hardly immune from corruption and abuse, and soon fell into the same cycle as other police forces of repeated moralization campaigns.¹⁵² The corps was also perpetually understaffed, leading to serious backlogs of thousands of arrest orders.¹⁵³ Moreover, the Gendarmería unconstitutionally held on to its investigative and arrest powers, continuing to illegally operate a detective corps, the Servicio Secreto, that actually outnumbered the constitutional Policía Judicial and handled most prominent cases.¹⁵⁴ As Pablo Piccato has discussed, the Servicio Secreto was particularly criticized as unconstitutional and abusive, but was simultaneously seen as necessary given the Judicial Police's failures. For example, when the 1939 yearly conference of prosecutorial agents denounced the Servicio Secreto's unconstitutionality and abusiveness, the Jefe de Policía claimed that the real problem lay with excessively lenient laws and judicial authorities, while the head of the Servicio Secreto

hace muchísimo tiempo, de considerar que el policía desde ser un hombre de mucha fuerza, corpulento, y hasta cierto punto un verdadero matón". Another described it as "una policía eficiente, que es una policía competente." The proposal had called to expand the size of the Policía Judicial from forty-five to fifty agents and increase their salaries to six pesos per day. After debate, the chamber called to expand the force to seventy-five men: fifty "first-class" agents (paid eight pesos per day) and twenty-five "second-class" agents (paid five pesos per day).

¹⁵² For example, in 1941 the Procurador General announced the "purification" of the Policía Judicial, publicizing the firing of a single rogue agent. "El Procurador General inició labor de depuración policial," *La Prensa*, 28 March 1941. On corruption in the Policía Judicial, see: Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio*, 180–84; Davis, "Policing, Regime Change and Democracy," 15–16.

¹⁵³ In 1942, for instance, the press reported that the Policía Judicial, with less than one hundred agents, was overworked and had failed to fulfill thousands of arrest orders and court summons. "La Policía Judicial viene laborando en forma eficaz," *El Nacional*, 6 March 1942. The article's title is rather misleading. Although the journalist could not confirm rumors that 8,000 arrest orders had gone unfilled, he did find around 1,000 such orders, as well as numerous court summons, that had gone unfilled. Not long after, the Procurador General announced rather vague reform plans, and boasted that the Policía Judicial had made some sixty-eight arrests in March (very few to brag about, given earlier reports about the number of unfilled arrest orders). "Frutos de la labor de la Policía Judicial del D.F.," *Novedades*, 6 May 1942.

¹⁵⁴ It should be noted that the Servicio Secreto was also referred to as the Comisiones de Seguridad and the Oficina de Investigaciones y Seguridad Pública. In the early 1940s, at the same time that the Policía Judicial numbered ninety-four agents, there were around 250 Servicio Secreto agents. "La Policía Judicial viene laborando en forma eficaz," *El Nacional*, 6 March 1942; "Siete meses de intenso trabajo en la Jefatura de Policía del D.F.," *El Nacional*, 18 March 1940. As Elisa Speckman Guerra notes, in 1961 the Policía Judicial reportedly only had eighty agents, compared with 450 in the Servicio Secreto. Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio*, 174; Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 114.

casuistically claimed that, as a dependency of the preventive police, his department's work was preventive by definition and therefore constitutional.¹⁵⁵

But if the *Policía Judicial* failed to live up to its promise to prevent abuses, it nonetheless pointed toward a new trend: the creation of new police agencies, to supplement rather than totally replace the old as a way to act against intractable corruption and abuses in other agencies.¹⁵⁶ To the *Policía Judicial* and the *Gendarmería's* foot police, mounted police, and *Servicio Secreto* were added a large number of other police corps. By 1932, one journalist claimed that there were some fifteen police forces operating in the Federal District, and he undoubtedly missed a few.¹⁵⁷ The list included a wide array of plainclothes agents from many federal agencies—including *Gobernación*, *Hacienda*, *Industria y Comercio*, and the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*—alongside a special police force for the nationally-operated railway system, numerous semi-public “private” police corps (to be discussed in Chapter Five), and other agencies.¹⁵⁸ The military also increasingly played a role, especially in political policing, but sometimes simply in response to fears of crime waves.¹⁵⁹ Some of the new agencies responded to changes in official priorities: the transit police, for instance, were created due to the growing

¹⁵⁵ “La reunión de procuradores y la policía,” *El nacional*, 13 May 1939. On the dispute more broadly, see: “Trascendental debate; la policía preventiva,” *El Universal*, 12 May 1939; “El Congreso de Procuradores: un fracaso,” *La Prensa*, 13 May 1939; “Terminó el congreso de procuradores,” *El Universal*, 14 May 1939.

For a later critique of the *Servicio Secreto*, see: Enrique Emilio Arceo García, “La Jefatura de Policía usurpa funciones” (Tesis de Licenciatura en Derecho, México, UNAM, Facultad de Leyes, 1947).

¹⁵⁶ Davis, “Policing and Populism,” 150–51.

¹⁵⁷ “Multiplicidad de policías,” *El Nacional*, 8 June 1932, 3.

¹⁵⁸ “Multiplicidad de policías,” *El Nacional*, 8 June 1932, 3.

Although the vast majority of court cases continued to only feature the Preventive Police, Judicial Police, and *Servicio Secreto*, other forces appeared at times (especially the “private” police discussed in Chapter Five). The *Policía Hidráulica Federal*, for instance, were noted as having helped arrest a suspect in Ixtacalco in 1942. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3394, Exp. 624214: 1942, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones, Privación Ilegal de la Libertad.

¹⁵⁹ On the military's broader role in policing (usually in the countryside), see: Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*; Fallaw and Rugeley, *Forced Marches*. On military preventive policing, see: “Fuerzas federales vigilarán la ciudad,” *El Globo*, 12 February 1925, 7.

number of cars (and associated accidents) on the capital's roads.¹⁶⁰ As authorities took an increasingly harsh line against drug use after the Revolution, narcotics policing gained in importance, while reports that the Gendarmería was implicated in the drug trade spurred the involvement of other agencies.¹⁶¹ Salud Pública (the Ministry of Public Health), which had substantial authority over drug matters, founded its own narcotics police in 1925. The force carried out the most prominent drug trafficking investigations for decades until it gradually declined in importance and suffered administrative changes in the midcentury, being slowly replaced by other corps.¹⁶² The Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) was founded in 1947 with the aim of investigating and repressing political dissent.¹⁶³ Critics regularly argued that the profusion of police agencies hampered efficacy and unsuccessfully called for centralization, and as Diane E. Davis has argued, it also impeded anti-corruption measures.¹⁶⁴ Reform efforts generated their own problems without resolving the ones they were implemented to fix.

¹⁶⁰ Originally operated by the Ayuntamiento, the transit police became a new department within the Jefatura de Policía in 1927. Ponce Hernández, "La gestión de un nuevo orden," 34–38.

¹⁶¹ Internal inspections of the foot gendarmes alleged that many of them sold drugs on the side. AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 48: Informe mensual of 4 March 1925. See also reports of a gendarme having been fired and arrested after being caught selling narcotics in 1925. *Ibid.*, Caja 1, Exp. 43.

¹⁶² Pérez Montfort, *Tolerancia y prohibición*, 185, 229–64; Pérez Ricart and Olvera Hernández, "Ascenso y declive de la Policía de Narcóticos."

¹⁶³ Navarro, *Political Intelligence*, 182–85.

¹⁶⁴ Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, "Fue, es y será – Inaplazable mejoramiento del servicio de policía," *El Gráfico*, 3 September 1942. Besides complaining of there being too many police forces, others argued that the explosion in number of offices within the Inspección General further impeded coordination. "Hay demasiados jefes en la Inspección," *El Gráfico de la Mañana*, 30 November 1928. One unsuccessful centralization proposal from 1935, for example, sought to elevate the Jefatura de Policía to a cabinet ministry, in the process extending its jurisdiction throughout the country. AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 895, Exp. 545.3/234. Similarly, a 1950 proposal for general police reform from the Unión de Madres Mexicanas included a call to create a cabinet-level, national-scope police department "como en países más avanzados que el nuestro." AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 280, Exp. 417/8: Petition of 25 April 1950. Davis, "Policing and Regime Transition," 150–51.

Moralization, Professionalization, and Militarization

Many observers continued to place the root of the police problem in the hearts of its agents. In 1925, for instance, *El Globo* blamed corruption on “unscrupulous functionaries who only see sources of enrichment in the violation of the law, in unjust complacencies, in a word, in forgetting their duties to society.”¹⁶⁵ By changing the hearts and minds of police personnel, would-be reformers hoped to end abuses, favoritism, and arbitrariness, and create a force that truly upheld the law. Reforms sought to improve the quality of police personnel through various measures, such as repeated “moralization” campaigns, professionalization through education, and the inculcation of military discipline. Such reforms occasionally removed abusive agents and changed how gendarmes related to police work in important ways (to be discussed in the final sections of the chapter), yet were ultimately seen as inadequate in the face of the deep-rooted structural problems of the police—although their inadequacy hardly prevented the same measures from being repeatedly proposed.

Authorities regularly proclaimed “moralization” (or “purification”, *depuración*) campaigns to fire abusive and corrupt police, much as they had during the Porfiriato. Such campaigns were celebrated, and at times called for, by the press, and were framed as an effective means of disciplining the force.¹⁶⁶ Police ranking from simple gendarmes to comisarios, and at times higher officials, were fired with some regularity for abuses.¹⁶⁷ But these efforts did little to

¹⁶⁵ “La moralización de la policía,” *El Globo*, 10 February 1925, 5. Quote: “funcionarios poco escrupulosos que ven sólo fuentes de enriquecimiento en la violación de la ley, en las complacencias injustas, en una palabra, en el olvido de sus deberes para con la sociedad.”

¹⁶⁶ “El escándalo policíaco,” *El Universal*, 9 February 1925, 3; “La moralización de la policía,” *El Globo*, 10 February 1925, 5; Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, “Fue, es y será – Aspectos fundamentales del problema policíaco,” *El Gráfico*, 26 November 1942.

¹⁶⁷ Eighteen (of twenty total) comisarios and subcomisarios were removed in 1925 following an investigation into corruption, and fifteen were similarly removed in 1928. “Comisarios y subcomisarios destituidos,” *El Globo*, 8 February 1925, Second Section, 1; “La inmoralidad de la policía de esta capital llegaba a un grado alarmante,” *Excelsior*, 8 February 1925, 1; “Quince de los veinte comisarios fueron removidos,” *El Universal Gráfico*, 28 July

instill discipline. The experience of gendarme José Mata Martínez is instructive. One day in 1934, Mata drew his pistol on two women, presumably street vendors, insulted them, and fired a shot in the air while demanding that they sell him a lemonade on credit. When they still refused, he angrily hurled a peso at one woman's head with such force that it left a bruise. A plainclothes agent who saw the incident filed a report, and Mata was fired after an investigation turned up further complaints against him. But Mata had powerful friends. In July of 1935, congressional deputy Juan Manuel Carrillo wrote a letter to the chief of police, commending Mata as "a person of very good antecedents," lamenting that he was currently jobless, and recommending that he be hired as he already had police experience. Despite a subsequent internal report that noted not only Mata's disgraceful dismissal, but also that he had racked up an impressive forty-seven disciplinary infractions in thirteen months of police service, he was quickly rehired and served until 1941.¹⁶⁸ Mata's case was typical in many respects: police who were fired for abuse relatively rarely faced punishment, and many, especially those with good personal connections, returned to the force with ease. This was even more notable for higher officials. Valente Quintana, a famous detective in charge of the Servicio Secreto, resigned in 1925 facing allegations of corruption on a vast scale, but the charges against him were quickly dropped, and he was named chief of police in 1929.¹⁶⁹

1928, 2. For earlier examples of comisarios being fired for abuses, see: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Secretaría, Comisariías, Caja 5, Expediente 294: Firing of Manuel Lozano Guzmán in 1917. On the firing and arrest of the head of the foot police after he was found to have been selling police equipment on the black market, see: "El Coronel Ruiz Jefe de la Gendarmería de a Pie fue destituido y aprehendido," *El Demócrata*, 30 March 1922, 4. For a typical firing of a gendarme, in this case for attempting to extort a couple who he wrongfully arrested for kissing in a movie theater, see: "Policía mordelón a quien se dio de baja," *Excélsior*, 1 June 1930, 8.

¹⁶⁸ AHCM, Departamento del Distrito Federal, Policía y Bomberos, Expedientes Personales, Caja 2, Paquete 2, Exp. N/133.2/30105 Bis: Personnel file of José Mata Martínez.

¹⁶⁹ The Valente Quintana case, which included allegations of the theft of stolen goods and involvement in prostitution, has received extensive discussion. Pulido Esteva, "El caso Quintana"; Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 112–13. Quintana was also accused of smaller-scale corruption, as well. In one court record from 1922, Quintana was accused of breaking his lease and stealing furniture from a furnished apartment. He reportedly threatened his

Some moralization campaigns also ran aground on the rocks of opposition from the police themselves. In 1940, Jefe de Policía José Manuel Núñez bitterly complained to *La Prensa* that his much-publicized efforts to moralize the Servicio Secreto—which had included calling a press conference where he chastised the entire assembled agency for a series of scandals, and demanded explanations for why they had not followed his orders against corruption—had failed. Servicio agents, he said, had actively resisted his campaign, engaging in work stoppages and slowdowns whenever he tried to root out corrupt police.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps unsurprisingly given such opposition, Núñez’s successor Miguel Z. Martínez distinguished himself by avoiding any public comment on police corruption—a rare step for a police chief, as anticorruption campaigns were a useful means of building a profile—despite repeated public scandals during his tenure.¹⁷¹

As quickly became clear, the regular firing of unruly gendarmes led to little improvement in the force. Some, including police who were fired for missing work while ill, accused officials

landlord in an attempt to get him to drop the accusations, hand over the security deposit, and accept the return of the furniture. When that failed (as the landlord demanded payment instead), Quintana resorted to stationing police agents in the apartment around the clock until he could send back the furniture. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1733, Exp. 310928: 1922, Abuso de Autoridad, Ataques a las Garantías Individuales.

¹⁷⁰ While there may have been an element of self-exculpation in Núñez’s explanation, it seems likely that he was basically correct about their opposition to his project. In fact, during the conference agents had even issued a barely-veiled threat to stop working, complaining that seasoned criminals used allegations of abuse to derail police work, and openly wondering whether it was worth it to continue arresting criminals. The press conference is discussed in detail in “Filípica del Jefe de la Policía contra el imperio de la mordida,” *La Prensa*, 28 September 1940. For a less sympathetic take on the same conference, see: “El Jefe de la Policía exige más eficiencia,” *Excelsior*, 28 September 1940.

¹⁷¹ Unusually for a new police chief, Martínez’s publicized reform plans made no mention of anti-corruption measures. “Es un hecho la reorganización policíaca,” *El Nacional*, 25 January 1941; “Será creada en México la Estampilla del Bombero – Estableceranse más centrales en los estados,” *Excelsior*, 25 January 1941. Martínez also rather aggressively attacked press critiques of the police, and in one speech lamented that journalists neither understood nor respected police work. “Carta aclaratoria del Jefe de la Policía,” *El Universal*, 17 January 1942; “El Ier Congreso Nacional de Policía se inicia el día de hoy,” *El Nacional*, 28 March 1942.

El Universal denounced an incident of illegal arrest and torture by police at the notorious El Pocito jail. Months later, the same paper discussed the murder of the wealthy Salvadoran Gregorio Aguillón by police, who killed him in a botched extortion attempt and tried to frame it as an act of self defense. “Sección Editorial – La reorganización de la policía,” *El Universal*, 5 February 1941; “Sección Editorial – Reorganización y moralización de la policía,” *El Universal*, 3 December 1942.

of excessive zeal.¹⁷² Others suggested that authorities had made police work too unstable, impeding professionalization (although, as will be seen, this was perhaps overblown) and allowing unscrupulous officials to open up positions in order to hire well-connected applicants.¹⁷³ Still other critiques focused on the apparent futility of seemingly unending moralization campaigns. The prominent cartoonist Audiffred captured this perception in a 1931 cartoon, titled “The Police Trouble of the Past Few Days,” published in *El Universal Ilustrado* (Figure 2.1). In it, he portrayed the Jefatura as a matronly figure washing a small child, representing the police force, in a tub labeled “dismissal.” The mother exasperatedly scolds her unruly offspring, saying, “Every time you ‘get dirty,’ I’m going to ‘bathe’ you!”¹⁷⁴ Although the cartoon portrayed the Jefatura as reactive to scandal, willing to fire gendarmes, it also suggested that it was something of a lost cause: the child would undoubtedly get dirty again, as children do, and the mother would again chastise him in the bath, as had happened many times before.

¹⁷² For a gendarme’s complaint that he had been unjustly fired for missing a day while sick, see: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Empleados, Caja 1, Exp. 16: Letter by Adolfo Arcos, 28 March 1922. He was rehired.

¹⁷³ “Sección Editorial – Reorganización y moralización de la policía,” *El Universal*, 3 December 1942.

¹⁷⁴ “El lío policiaco de los últimos días...,” *El Universal Ilustrado*, 16 April 1931, 40. I thank Diego Antonio Franco for kindly providing me with this source and its citation information.



Figure 2.1: “El lio policiaco de los últimos días...”

Source: *El Universal Ilustrado*, 16 April 1931, 40. I thank Diego Antonio Franco for providing me with this source.

Besides repetitive moralization campaigns, police education was seen as one of the other main routes to professionalization. If Porfirian efforts to improve training had come to naught, postrevolutionary authorities met with greater success. In 1923, authorities created the Escuela Técnica de Policía, the first police school, with an inaugural cohort of 100 police. Students, who were to work part-time as police while attending until they graduated a few months later as “gendarmes técnicos” (“technical gendarmes”), took classes on martial arts, weapons training, police administration, investigative techniques, civics, and geography, among other topics. By

1926, officials claimed that over 1,000 gendarmes had graduated from the school.¹⁷⁵ However, while the Técnicos were intended as a higher class of police, they were still often subject to the same criticisms as other gendarmes. One sarcastic letter from 1925, for instance, denounced them as trigger-happy “savages,” claimed that they were widely mocked by U.S. tourists, and wrote that it would be better to replace the Técnicos with “*prácticos*” [practical police, rather than technical police].¹⁷⁶ Newspapers and police officials alike continued to call for more extensive, “scientific,” police education, especially for a full-time school to train all police and not merely a portion of the force.¹⁷⁷ Although the Inspector General announced a proposal to create a full-time Escuela Nacional de Policía in 1928, it was not implemented at the time.¹⁷⁸ When, in 1941, authorities claimed to have founded a new Escuela del Policía Uniformado (which may have just been a temporary rebranding of the old Escuela Técnica meant to burnish the image of the new police chief), it still only had room for 100 part-time students per cohort.¹⁷⁹

Besides moralization and training, officials also promoted militarization as a means of disciplining and the police, based on the postrevolutionary military’s much-promoted image as a

¹⁷⁵ Pulido Esteva, “Los negocios de la policía,” 14–15; Ponce Hernández, “La gestión de un nuevo orden,” 79–81.

¹⁷⁶ AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 131: Letter for 17 August 1925. Of the técnicos, the writers claimed that “son unos salvajes”, and further wrote that “Toda la gente consciente, está de acuerdo en que la policía, no se hace en tres meses, y creemos que un “práctico”, con varios años de servicios puede ser más útil.” The letter was written by two residents of San Miguel street near Merced market, Margarita Sánchez and Josefina Guerrero. In a reflection of attitudes about the acceptability of violence in poorer areas of the city, the writers suggested that “estos novicios, deberían de ser mandados a practicar a la Colonia de la Bolsa o a los barrios más bajos de la ciudad”.

¹⁷⁷ Agustín Petriciolo, “La delincuencia en Mexico,” *El Gráfico*, 19 March 1940; “Reorganización de la policía,” *Novedades*, 6 August 1941; Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, “Fue, es y será – Inaplazable mejoramiento del servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 3 September 1942. Police congresses called for new police schools. “Transcendentales resoluciones en el 2o. Congreso de Policía,” *El Nacional*, 6 October 1945.

¹⁷⁸ “Será una verdadera carrera la de policía técnico,” *El Universal Gráfico*, 3 August 1928.

¹⁷⁹ “Será creada en México la Estampilla del Bombero – Estableceranse más centrales en los estados,” *Excelsior*, 25 January 1941. Newspapers from later dates continued to refer to the Escuela Técnica de Policía and imply that it was the only police school, suggesting the Escuela del Policía Uniformado was a mere temporary rebranding. “La policía de México es excelente,” *Excelsior*, 14 October 1941.

bastion of patriotism and professionalism.¹⁸⁰ There had always been close ties between the army and the police, but these connections deepened after the Revolution. The vast majority of police chiefs continued to be military officers, as had been the case during the Porfiriato.¹⁸¹ This trend extended deeper into the police hierarchy from the Revolution onward, as comisarios and other midlevel police positions increasingly came to be filled by military officers as well, although rank-and-file gendarmes remained largely civilian.¹⁸² The imposition of military discipline among rank-and-file gendarmes was trumpeted as a means of combatting corruption and aiding professionalization, especially through heavily-promoted “militarization” reforms from the late 1930s onward.¹⁸³ While many applauded militarization as essential to discipline, others criticized it as inappropriate and unconstitutional for a civilian institution; one column from 1941 in *El Universal* charged militarization with “denaturing and degenerating” the police.¹⁸⁴

Above all, the quality of recruits continued to be the object of much concern. Many in the police hierarchy and the press alike fretted that policing attracted only those who lacked the skills necessary for other work, adding to the inefficacy and immorality of the force.¹⁸⁵ As

¹⁸⁰ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*; Ponce Hernández, “La gestión de un nuevo orden,” 75–76.

¹⁸¹ Davis, “Policing and Populism,” 140–41. From the late 1910s to the early 1980s, there were only two civilian police chiefs.

¹⁸² For example, one list of officers in the Gendarmería Montada suggests that many were former (or even active-duty) military personnel. AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 9: Document of 21 October 1922.

¹⁸³ Police regulations from 1939 and 1941 stipulated that gendarmes were to receive military training. Reglamento Orgánico de la Policía Preventiva del Distrito Federal, 19 October 1939: Capítulo Único, Sección VI; Reglamento de la Policía Preventiva del Distrito Federal, 4 December 1941: Art. 7. Davis, “Policing and Regime Transition,” 78–79.

¹⁸⁴ Fernando Sastrías F., “La policía,” *El Universal*, 23 January 1941.

¹⁸⁵ In the 1930s, Salvador Novo commented that many police signed up because they needed a job of some kind and were useless for any other work; only some had real aptitude for it. Salvador Novo, “Acerca de los policías,” in *Antología, 1925-1965* (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1966), 119. Quote: “Ingresa uno al cuerpo de la policía cuando tiene necesidad de un trabajo cualquiera y no sirve para otro o cuando descubre, tras ponderada introspección, inequívocas dotes para el cargo.”

Similarly, one police commandant commented to the press in 1941 that “cuando una persona no tiene oficio y desconoce cualquier arte, lo que pide es ser policía.” “Reorganización de la policía,” *Novedades*, 6 August 1941.

favoritism remained a perennial complaint, and was said to lead to the hiring of police with criminal backgrounds, critics repeatedly called for impartial, merit-based recruitment.¹⁸⁶ Although many proposed hiring qualified, morally-upstanding police as the chief guarantee of efficacy and incorruptibility, personnel requirements changed only slowly.¹⁸⁷ The 1922 regulation required recruits to be literate Mexican nationals between the ages of eighteen and forty, at least 1.74 meters tall, without chronic illnesses, and to provide two letters of recommendation that swore they were not habitually drunk, stipulations that differed little from Porfirian requirements.¹⁸⁸ By 1941, regulations were only a little stricter. Recruits were to be Mexican by birth, between twenty-one and thirty-five years of age, notable for their good conduct, and needed to enroll in the police academy; in a press release from that year, the police chief also claimed that they needed to be at least 1.68 meters tall, to have at least four years of primary education, and to turn in two letters of recommendation and a security deposit of 150 pesos for their equipment, although these stipulations were not included in official regulations.¹⁸⁹ The relative laxity of requirements suggests that authorities worried that requiring too much of recruits would make it difficult to attract applicants.

Many placed low salaries at the base of the problem. Despite some critiques that increased wages would be useless without other changes—congressional deputy Julián S. González stated that, as police spent much of their time in pulquerías, raises would only allow

¹⁸⁶ See, for instance: Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, “Fue, es y será – Aspectos fundamentales del problema policíaco,” *El Gráfico*, 26 November 1942.

¹⁸⁷ In 1925, for instance, *El Globo* called for basing hiring on “la aptitude y a la honradez” of the recruit as the most important means of preventing corruption. “La moralización de la policía,” *El Globo*, 10 February 1925, 5. *Excelsior* wrote in 1940 that the police force required “individuos morales y conscientes.” “Loable iniciativa,” *Excelsior*, 7 March 1940.

¹⁸⁸ 1922 Ordenanza General para las Corporaciones de Policía, Art. 9.

¹⁸⁹ 1941 Reglamento de la Policía Preventiva del Distrito Federal, Art. 31; “Será creada en México la Estampilla del Bombero – Estableceranse más centrales en los estados,” *Excelsior*, 25 January 1941.

them to buy more pulque—most observers agreed that raises were necessary to attract better personnel and reduce the temptation of corruption.¹⁹⁰ But wages remained stubbornly low. In 1922, the Cámara de Diputados passed a budget that raised gendarmes' salaries from three to five pesos per day; however, it was never put into effect, and police continued to be paid anywhere from around two to three pesos per day well into the 1930s.¹⁹¹ In 1942, Jefe de Policía Miguel Z. Martínez bragged of having obtained salary increases for gendarmes from eighty-five to 120 pesos per month, or up to around four pesos per day, but this was still seen as insufficient, including by Martínez himself.¹⁹² Salaries climbed in the 1940s, although never high enough.¹⁹³ In 1947, one publicized reform plan suggested raising gendarmes' salaries to ten pesos per day. However, the lawyer commissioned by the government to comment on the plan's feasibility noted that this would not be enough, as the Jefatura de Policía had itself called for higher wages of fourteen to fifteen pesos per day as the bare minimum necessary.¹⁹⁴ Beyond low base pay, gendarmes' wages also continued to be “discounted” to cover their equipment. Although the

¹⁹⁰ DDCD No. 63, 29 November 1922. Similarly, in 1941 *El Universal* wrote that a proposed wage increase “puede ser inútil o tal vez contraproducente. Lo puede ser, porque los vicios de la policía son de organización, de sistema, de ley”. Fernando Sastrías F., “La policía,” *El Universal*, 23 January 1941.

¹⁹¹ DDCD No. 63, 29 November 1922. One (unfortunately incomplete) document from late 1924 states that gendarmes received three pesos per day. AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 15. In court testimony from the 1930s, gendarmes regularly gave their salaries as 1.9-3 pesos/day, or as up to ninety-four pesos per month. Differences in wages were likely due to seniority. See, for example: AGN, TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2627, Exp. 545915: Abuso de autoridad y lesiones (Appeal), Luis Peralta Olivarría, 1933; *Ibid.*, Caja 2636, Exp. 547374: Abuso de Autoridad y Allanamiento de Morada (Appeal), Benjamín Calderón González, 1933; *Ibid.*, Caja 2620, Exp. 554485: Contra un Agente de la Autoridad y Abuso de Autoridad, Ernesto Rangel Ibel and Emilio Jiménez Reyes, 1933; *Ibid.*, Caja 2755, Exp. 582131: Injurias y amenazas, Fernando Ortega García and Pedro Sánchez Librado, 1934; *Ibid.*, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: Abuso de Autoridad y Tentativa de Cohecho, Javier Villaseñor Pelayo, 1935; *Ibid.*, Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: Abuso de Autoridad y Cohecho, Miguel Gaytan Viramontes, 1937.

¹⁹² “Coordinación de servicios policíacos en todo el país,” *El Nacional*, 1 May 1942.

¹⁹³ Court testimony from 1947 indicates gendarmes made around seven pesos per day. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3952, Exp. 693213: 1947, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones; *Ibid.*, Caja 3883, Exp. 683127: 1947, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones, Violación; *Ibid.*, Caja 3904, Exp. 686318: 1947, Delito Oficial, Cohecho.

¹⁹⁴ AGN, Colecciones Presidenciales, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 571, Exp. 545.22/16. The commentary is included in Raúl F. Cárdenas's letter of 8 November 1947.

1922 Regulation stipulated that the practice was to be ended, it proved persistent.¹⁹⁵ Authorities claimed that it was necessary in order to fund benefits or to keep unscrupulous gendarmes from simply selling their equipment on the black market.¹⁹⁶ Police officials repeatedly announced that they had gotten rid of the discounts, yet journalists regularly reported on their continuation.¹⁹⁷

Police—especially the rank and file—also counted on uncertain benefits. The 1922 police regulation included provisions granting long-serving police a pension, to be paid for out of the police Caja de Ahorros y Préstamos.¹⁹⁸ The Caja, which drew its income from salary discounts (equivalent by the mid-1930s to one day’s salary per month) and fines levied against police for disciplinary infractions, was also supposed to fund services, including a police gymnasium, bath, and barbershop. However, the Caja was plagued with disfunction and severe funding shortfalls (the latter perhaps indicating that officials skimmed from the funds), and the gymnasium, bath, and barbershop were closed in 1925.¹⁹⁹ A similar system was re-established in 1934.²⁰⁰ By 1937, the new Caja ran baths, a barbershop with twenty barbers, a laundry and ironing service, a shoe repair and shine service, a gym, a library, a medical clinic, and a billiards hall with seven tables,

¹⁹⁵ 1922 Ordenanza General para las Corporaciones de Policía, Art. 93.

¹⁹⁶ Prior to the new regulations, Federal District Governor Celestino Gasca argued that his requiring gendarmes to pay a 40-peso deposit to receive pistols had been intended to keep them from selling their guns. “La policía de esta ciudad ha sido ya provista de armas,” *Excelsior*, 22 November 1921, Second Section, 1.

¹⁹⁷ In 1940, the Jefe de Policía claimed to have ended the practice of discounts. “Siete meses de intenso trabajo en la Jefatura de Policía del D.F.,” *El Nacional*, 18 March 1940. In 1942, Jefe de Policía Miguel Z. Martínez published a letter in *El Universal* insisting that he had gotten rid of discounts. The paper responded that gendarmes continued to report being forced to pay them. “Carta aclaratoria del Jefe de Policía,” *El Universal*, 17 January 1942; “Policía fina,” *El Universal*, 20 January 1942.

¹⁹⁸ 1922 Ordenanza General, Título Octavo: Retiros y pensiones. As Rohlfes notes, the Porfirian police pension system was extremely limited. Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 123–24.

¹⁹⁹ AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia: Memorandum of 21 January 1925. In the document, the head of the Caja de Ahorros informed the Governor that the service should have brought in about 10,000 pesos per month, but in the entirety of 1924 had only brought in a little over 23,000 pesos. He had thus been forced to close the “gimnasios, baños, peluquerías, etc., para la Policía”.

²⁰⁰ Manuel González Oropeza, “Policía y Constitución,” *Anuario Jurídico XV* (1988): 164.

but police complained in large numbers that the services were abysmal and rarely used.²⁰¹ Pensions, as well as the Caja's life insurance plan, were also seen as wildly insufficient.²⁰² The Caja proved so troublesome that it was simply eliminated in 1940, by which time officials presented its reliance on fines and salary discounts as a considerable burden on ordinary gendarmes that impeded police reform.²⁰³ The capital's police also never received housing support. While certain favored groups of state workers received subsidies, land grants, or even access to public housing under the PRI's corporatist politics, there is no indication that the government provided police with such benefits, despite gendarmes' repeated demands for them.²⁰⁴ Similarly, although the police were promised their own hospital, the Federal District government immediately opened it to the broader public as soon as it was completed in 1942.²⁰⁵ Formal benefits for police remained few and far between, perhaps in part because they were

²⁰¹ The 1937 report (from 21 May), along with numerous complaints—most importantly a series of seventeen petitions from various dates in 1936, each signed by anywhere from dozens to hundreds of police, that were collected together and sent to the president on 19 September 1936—is included in AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 357, Exp. 417/6.

²⁰² See, for example: AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 357, Exp. 417/6: Petition of 10 August 1936.

²⁰³ “Siete meses de intenso trabajo en la Jefatura de Policía del D.F.,” *El Nacional*, 18 March 1940; AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 357, Exp. 417/6: Presidential Decree No. 53; González Oropeza, “Policía y Constitución,” 165.

²⁰⁴ Police had petitioned for a colonia de policía since at least 1936 without success. AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 357, Exp. 417/6: Petition of 29 July 1936. In 1944 or 1945 the Oficina de Colonias of the DF considered a tract of land in Ixtacalco and Coyuya for the establishment of police housing, but an unidentified “otra agrupación” had disputed the claim. Police petitioned the president, seeking his intervention in their favor, to no avail. AGN, Manuel Ávila Camacho, Caja 378, Exp. 418.2/217: Petition of 16 April 1945 and subsequent documents. In 1947, police again unsuccessfully petitioned for presidential intervention in securing land, funding, and loans to construct homes, complaining that past governments had failed to live up to their promises to assist the police. AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 283, Exp. 418.2/128: Petition of 16 July 1947 and subsequent documents.

On government housing policy, see: de Antuñano, “Planning a ‘Mass City’”; Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, chaps. 3, 6. Housing support was not solely limited to state workers: Benjamin Smith has noted that authorities also assisted a number of journalists with housing in return for favorable coverage from 1948 onward. Smith, *The Mexican Press and Civil Society*, 76–77.

²⁰⁵ The reason given was the spiraling number of traffic accidents in the growing city. “Hospital de emergencia,” *El Nacional*, 22 March 1942. Police had earlier petitioned for their own hospital in 1936. AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 357, Exp. 417/6: Petition of 10 August 1936; Petition of 31 July 1936.

largely prohibited from unionizing (except for a brief period from 1937 to 1939).²⁰⁶ In general, while some (especially the police) claimed that budgets were insufficient to effectively professionalize the force, others argued that budgetary increases would be ineffective without first improving the quality of the police.²⁰⁷

Police Work and Technology

Implementing new technology was seen as a means of modernizing the police, making them more effective and professional, but these efforts had only a relatively limited impact on police practices. Authorities and observers regularly celebrated and promoted new technologies, especially in the national and international police conferences that Mexican police increasingly participated in from the late 1920s onward.²⁰⁸ The 1933 Congress, for instance, heavily promoted the application of science to criminal prevention and investigation; among the proposed panels, participants were to discuss topics like ballistics, psychiatry, and the works of

²⁰⁶ Davis, "Policing and Regime Transition," 77–78; Davis, "Policing and Populism," 147–48. It was not until 1966 that the police were incorporated into the ISSSTE (social security system). González Oropeza, "Policía y Constitución," 168.

²⁰⁷ Such concerns were at the heart of the 1922 congressional budget debates. *DDCD* No. 63, 29 November 1922. For some later examples calling for increased spending on the police as necessary for moralization, see: "Policía fina," *El Universal*, 20 January 1942; "Congreso Nacional de Policía en México," *Excelsior*, 25 February 1944. Critiques of raising the budget without first improving personnel were raised in: Fernando Sastrías F., "La policía," *El Universal*, 23 January 1941; Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, "Fue, es y será – Aspectos fundamentales del problema policiaca," *El Gráfico*, 26 November 1942.

Based on scattered and incomplete budget estimates, spending on the police generally increased in absolute terms over the postrevolutionary era, but gradually declined as a share of the Federal District's ballooning overall budget, from over 20% in 1929 to a bit under 10% by the early 1950s. On city budgets, see: Sergio Miranda Pacheco, *La creación del Departamento del Distrito Federal: urbanización, política y cambio institucional, 1920-1934* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2008), 78, Cuadro 2; Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 189, Cuadro 3; Oliver Oldman et al., *Financing Urban Development in Mexico City: A Case Study of Property Tax, Land Use, Housing, and Urban Planning. Translations of Law*, Reprint, 2014 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 26, Table 12.

²⁰⁸ The best source on police conferences remains the numerous but scattered articles collected in the Archivos Económicos (a collection of newspaper clippings sent in by Hacienda agents) file L06328, located in the Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada. I eagerly await Ricky Sakamoto-Pugh's work on the topic.

the Laboratorio de Criminalística e Identificación, while experts in legal medicine, dactyloscopy, and other fields were to give presentations. The Congress especially noted the attendance of the prominent criminologist Benjamín A. Martínez, “who the criminals of Mexico fear more than a battalion of mounted police for his ‘witchcraft,’ as they call it, in the art of identifying criminals and turning them over to the judicial machine confessed and convicted.”²⁰⁹ But practices often appeared rather less impressive: in 1943, for instance, the noted penologist José Ángel Cenicerros harshly criticized the police for failing to effectively modernize their investigative techniques, preferring to use intuition and forced confessions rather than careful, scientific detective work.²¹⁰

But technology held the promise of not only modernizing criminal investigation, but of revolutionizing the quotidian *vigilancia* of patrol work. The limited impact of technology in police work is perhaps best exemplified by the troubled “motorization” of the police, especially the introduction of the radio-equipped patrol car (*radiopatrulla*). As the city expanded and the number of cars on the roads increased in the years after the Revolution, police increasingly made use of modern vehicles to supplement foot and mounted patrols. The police motorcycle squad was in operation as early as 1924, and by 1929, the Oficina de Tránsito had some 51 motorcycle police.²¹¹ Beyond their presence on the roads, motorcycles were also useful as a way of promoting the image of a modern police force: a special squadron of stunt riders made regular appearances at police conferences and played a prominent role in the 1951 Pedro Infante film *¡A*

²⁰⁹ “Segundo Congreso Policiaco Nacional,” *El Nacional*, 27 October 1932, Second Section, 1, 3. On Benjamín A. Martínez: “‘a quien los criminales de México temen más que a un batallón de la ‘montada’ por sus ‘brujerías’ según ellos las llaman, en el arte de indentificarlos y entregarlos confesos y convictos a la máquina judicial”.

²¹⁰ José Ángel Cenicerros, “Policía de olfato y Policía Técnica,” *Excelsior*, 27 October 1943. Historians tend to agree with such assessments: Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio*, 174–77; Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 114–18.

²¹¹ For 1924: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 15: Partial salary list for Servicio de Motocicletas. On 1930: Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Atlas general*, Vol. I, 66.

*toda máquina!*²¹² The police also used a number of cars from the 1920s onward for an array of services—transporting prisoners, conducting reviews of foot gendarmes at their posts, and occasional patrols.²¹³ But in contrast to these supplemental uses, the radiopatrulla project sought to systematically significantly reshape policing in Mexico City in line with modern ideals.

Although there had been similar proposals in the 1930s, the project began in earnest in 1940, under the recently-appointed Jefe de Policía José Manuel Núñez, who appointed the experienced police agent Álvaro Basail to head up the project.²¹⁴ Núñez, who (as mentioned earlier) portrayed himself as a crusading reformer, would make the radiopatrulla project a major part of his program.²¹⁵ The project was framed as a necessity. According to the police and the press alike, criminals had enthusiastically adopted the most modern cars and weapons, allowing them to easily outrun and outgun the police. Clearly, it was claimed, the police needed to modernize to deal with modern crime.²¹⁶

²¹² See, for example, “Éxito de la delegación,” *El Nacional*, 13 September 1937; “Es un hecho la reorganización policiaca,” *El Nacional*, 25 January 1941. The 1941 international conference, in particular, saw Mexico send a huge delegation of 126 people, including not only the motorcycle stunt squad, but also a team of marksmen, the police band, and an assortment of singers, dancers, and mariachis. See also: Ismael Rodríguez, *¡A toda máquina!*, 1951.

²¹³ For example, in 1921 the head of the Comisiones de Seguridad requested and received a car and ten Mausser carabines (the latter borrowed from the city’s military garrison) for a nighttime patrol service. AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 5.

²¹⁴ In 1935, the “Constructora Electro-Telefónica” company had created a detailed proposal to install a radiopatrulla system, meeting with the Jefe de Policía and seeking Cárdenas’s approval. The project failed to gain presidential backing for unclear reasons—likely related to cost—and seems to have been abandoned. Further efforts to install a police radio system in 1937 also seem to have lacked much presidential support and met with unclear results. Both are documented in: AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 891, Exp. 545.3 131.

Basail was described as “uno de los policías de carrera más competentes y con largo historial en los más difíciles trabajos contra la delincuencia organizada,” and apparently had tracked criminals internationally. “El C. Presidente elogia la creación del Consejo Cívico de Seguridad Pública,” *El Nacional*, 7 March 1940.

²¹⁵ “Siete meses de intenso trabajo en la Jefatura de Policía del D.F.,” *El Nacional*, 18 March 1940.

²¹⁶ The PRM mouthpiece *El Nacional* expressed consternation that “los criminales, retrasados desde el punto de vista de la evolución moral, aceptan con júbilo ciertos progresos de orden técnico,” and blamed impunity on the police lacking the technology to effectively pursue and confront well-organized, well-equipped modern criminals. Similarly, *Excelsior* claimed that criminals were no longer simply ratero petty thieves, but were people “de mejor preparación” who used modern arms, flagrantly committed crimes in the city center, and had no fear of the police. *El Universal* wrote that “se estima que únicamente proveyendo a la Policía de un buen equipo motorizado se logrará detener un poco este auge de criminalidad.” “Cooperación privada a la policía,” *El Nacional*, 8 March; “Loable

Basail's plan, as issued to the press in early March, was heralded as a drastic step toward modernizing the police force and improving public protection. Instead of the existing system, in which foot police stood guard on corners (as they had since the Porfiriato, or indeed before), Basail proposed a centralized rapid-response system. The capital would be divided into thirty-two sectors, each of which would be patrolled day and night by a speedy, modern police car, dissuading would-be criminals and allowing for the easy pursuit of anyone foolish enough to break the law. Each car was to be crewed by three skilled police, selected from the best in the force, and would be well-equipped with tear gas launchers, flare guns, and powerful automatic weapons to overpower even the best-armed criminals. Most importantly, each car would hold a radio receiver, allowing it to receive orders instantly from the central Jefatura. The central offices would be equipped with an extensive telephone system, attended by well-trained personnel, to receive calls from anywhere in the city. Anyone in the capital who dialed 0-6 could call for help, and even if they could not speak, the system would automatically inform the police of the address, allowing the Jefatura to direct the nearest radiopatrulla car to the scene of the crime.²¹⁷ Basail's plan, which was noted as similar to systems in place in cities like New York, Chicago, and Buenos Aires, was praised in the press as a way of mitigating the lack of sufficient police to cover the fast-growing city.²¹⁸ It also, although this was not discussed, likely was seen as a

iniciativa," *Excelsior*, 7 March 1940; "Han sido considerables las ventas de bonos de seguridad," *El Universal*, 16 March 1940.

As Pablo Piccato has shown, such rhetoric had existed practically from the start, and especially gained prominence in the late 1910s and early 1920s; fear that criminals had somehow modernized was a permanent concern that justified strengthening the police. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, chap. 7.

²¹⁷ Basail's plan was discussed at length in "Reorganización de los servicios policíacos," *El Nacional*, 9 March 1940.

²¹⁸ *La Prensa* reported that the equipment would be identical to that used by police in the US cities of New York, Washington, Chicago, and Saint Louis, and would bring Mexico to the forefront of policing, equal to countries like the US, Canada, Argentina, and Brazil. "Golpe de muerte a la delincuencia de la metrópoli con la legion motorizada y el control central de la Jefatura de Policía," *La Prensa*, 7 June 1940. As Lila Caimari has noted,

means of reducing corruption and favoritism. If, in 1895, *El Diario del Hogar* had proposed pulling gendarmes off their corners and sending them on patrols as a means of breaking the interpersonal ties that impeded regulatory enforcement and gave rise to abuses, Basail's plan took this a step forward. The police would now be ensconced in a mobile bubble of technology, speeding through the city's streets, their only points of contact with the outside world the orders they received from headquarters and the criminals they targeted. They would, in short, be transformed by technology from often unruly agents of arbitrariness enmeshed in social relations, into modern representatives of pure authority.²¹⁹

Despite these promises, the federal government remained unwilling to fund the project. Instead, the private sector stepped in, reflecting growing ties between business elites and the regime by the 1940s.²²⁰ A group of businessmen, including the noted radio network owner Emilio Azcárraga, the prominent banker Aníbal de Iturbide, and various industrialists, created the Consejo Cívico de Seguridad Pública (Civic Council of Public Security) in early March of 1940, with Basail contracted as a technical advisor.²²¹ The Consejo organized and promoted a bond sale, targeting especially businesses and unions, the proceeds of which were to go toward

the Buenos Aires police began to make systematic use of cars in the 1930s, although they were attached to local stations rather than being used in a completely centralized service. Caimari, *While the City Sleeps*, 115.

²¹⁹ My thinking here is shaped by James Holston's work on the goals of architectural modernism in Brasília, which sought to break traditional social relations fostered by spatial interactions, as well as Lila Caimari's discussion of the introduction of radios and patrol cars in Buenos Aires. James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pt. 1; Caimari, *While the City Sleeps*, 114–17.

²²⁰ The press criticized the Federal District government for failing to fully assist in Núñez's modernization plans. Notably, the government appears to have spent little on police transportation during the 1930s: if the police force had some 51 motorcycles in 1930, by 1940 it had only 29 (although at that point the government agreed to purchase ten more). "Sigue modernizándose, para mayor eficiencia, el Cuerpo Motorizado de los Policias," *Excelsior*, 9 April 1940. On similar private fundraisers for police equipment in Buenos Aires, see: Caimari, *While the City Sleeps*, 85–89. On ties between business elites and the government after Cárdenas, see: Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1999).

²²¹ On the Consejo Cívico's formation, see: "Mejoramiento de los servicios de Policía del Distrito," *El Universal*, 6 March 1940. On the presence of Azcárraga and de Iturbide, see: "Una obra de servicio social," *El Nacional*, 18 March 1940.

purchasing the new equipment: fifty cars with the required radios and automatic weapons. The bond campaign was heavily promoted throughout the capital. Major newspapers counted down the days until the sale began, and the campaign was endorsed by the Cámara Nacional de Comercio (National Chamber of Commerce) and the Archbishop of Mexico City.²²² Bond purchases by businesses, unions, and individuals were celebrated by the press.²²³ Early on, it seemed to be a great success, reporting 200,000 pesos in sales on the first day alone.²²⁴

However, the bond campaign was less popular than anticipated. Although the press continued to proclaim it a success, in June of 1940 the original plan for fifty cars was quietly replaced by a much more modest proposal for only fifteen.²²⁵ When the campaign ended in mid-July, after about four months, sales totaled little over 250,000 pesos; nearly 350,000 pesos of bonds went unsold.²²⁶ Nonetheless, it was celebrated in the press, and authorities put on a spectacle when the cars (by then increased in number to twenty, as well as one “command car”) arrived in the capital on 1 November 1940. While mariachis played, the “snazzy” red-painted Buicks were lined up on public display in front of the Monumento de la Revolución. Despite the speech on the occasion from General Soto Larrea, who boasted that Mexico City’s police were “not only at the level of the great cities of the world, but simply at a higher level” as they now

²²² “Ventidos [sic] mil pesos para comprar el equipo que la policía está necesitando,” *Excélsior*, 8 March 1940; “Venta de bonos del consejo de seguridad,” *El Universal*, 10 March 1940; “Hoy empiezan a colocarse los bonos de seguridad pública en esta capital,” *El Nacional*, 11 March 1940; “Hoy empieza la venta de bonos de la seguridad,” *Excélsior*, 11 March 1940; “Cooperación del comercio,” *Excélsior*, 13 March 1940; “El Señor Arzobispo habla en pro de los bonos de seguridad,” *La Prensa*, 20 March 1940.

²²³ “Cooperación de los empleados públicos,” *El Nacional*, 15 March 1940; “Han sido considerables las ventas de bonos de seguridad,” *El Universal*, 16 March 1940; “Bello gesto de hilanderos,” *El Nacional*, 31 March 1940.

²²⁴ “Doscientos mil pesos fue lo que reunió la policía el primer día de colecta,” *Excélsior*, 12 March 1940.

²²⁵ “Continúa con éxito la campana pro bonos de seguridad pública,” *El Nacional*, 21 March 1940; “Golpe de muerte a la delincuencia de la metrópoli con la legion motorizada y el control central de la Jefatura de Policía,” *La Prensa*, 7 June 1940.

²²⁶ Long after the campaign ended, the Consejo Cívico published a balance sheet. “Consejo Cívico de Seguridad Pública,” *La Prensa*, 2 April 1941. See also: “No venderán ya bonos de policía,” *La Prensa*, 21 July 1940.

had the most up-to-date equipment, the radiopatrullas were still not ready for service.²²⁷ It was not until late January of 1941, by which point Núñez had been replaced as Jefe de Policía by General Miguel Z. Martínez, that the generators necessary to run their radios arrived, and their automatic weapons were apparently not purchased until mid-1942.²²⁸

Despite the rocky start, the radiopatrulla service was wildly celebrated and seemed to count on wide support. *El Universal*, in an otherwise critical editorial on the police, went so far as to say that the system promised to become the center of “collective defense against crime” and praised “the mechanization of the police”.²²⁹ Ten more cars were added over the course of 1941, bringing the total to thirty, and in December of that year authorities announced they would double the size of the force, although the plan never reached fruition.²³⁰

However, the force soon declined. In May of 1942, the centralized radiopatrulla service came to an abrupt end when Martínez carried out a major organizational change. The radiopatrullas, as well as the separate motorcycle squad, were to be nominally unified into a single Escuadrón Motorizado (Motorized Squadron) run by Álvaro Basail, who had headed the radiopatrullas from the start. However, they were no longer to be directed by the central Jefatura in response to calls. Day-to-day control over the cars (and motorcycles) was decentralized to the commandants of the foot police companies dispersed through the capital.²³¹ By January of 1943,

²²⁷ “Veinte automóviles radio-patrullas están listos para los servicios de la metrópoli,” *La Prensa*, 1 November 1940. Soto Larrea claimed the Federal District’s police were now “no sólo a la altura del de las grandes ciudades del mundo, sino sencillamente en grado superior” as their cars were so modern. The radiopatrullas were described as “flamante” [snazzy].

²²⁸ “Es un hecho la reorganización policíaca,” *El Nacional*, 25 January 1941; “Armas modernas para combatir al crimen, adquiridas por la Policía del Distrito Federal,” *El Nacional*, 20 July 1942.

²²⁹ “Sección Editorial – La reorganización de la policía,” *El Universal*, 5 February 1941.

²³⁰ “Contará la ciudad con sesenta carros ‘radiopatrullas’,” *Novedades*, 5 December 1941.

²³¹ “Reorganización en la policía,” *Excelsior*, 13 May 1942; “Nuevos sistemas de trabajo en la Jefatura de Policía,” *El Nacional*, 26 May 1942. While *El Nacional* (which had only become an autonomous paper in 1941 after years as the official party mouthpiece) celebrated the change as guaranteeing greater efficiency, *Excelsior* was more critical.

Excélsior eulogized the radiopatrullas. Despite being undermanned and underequipped, the service had intervened in nearly 30,000 cases and carried out over 17,000 arrests, catching 1,307 thieves in the act and discovering 221 stolen cars in eighteen months of service. The radiopatrullas were more useful, the paper claimed, than the city's four thousand foot gendarmes put together. But *Excélsior* lamented that, with the service's effective demise, more than half of the once-snazzy cars sat rusting in police garages, while the rest mostly sat idle at intersections rather than carrying out patrols. "In our country the methods of pursuit and prevention of crime have been parked for two centuries," the paper complained, bemoaning the continued reliance on foot police. Undeterred, Basail promoted a new proposal in *Excélsior* to completely replace the entire corps of foot gendarmes with a much smaller number of radiopatrullas, purportedly saving the city money while improving responsiveness and protection; however, the plan was not carried out.²³²

Little changed over the course of the decade. According to an internal report, by 1947 the radiopatrulla service still counted on just fourteen cars, tasked with patrolling twenty-four colonias. A larger number of neighborhoods, mostly (but not entirely) working-class parts of the Federal District as far distant as Tlalpan and as close to the center as Guerrero, completely lacked access to the radio-response service. Authorities noted that the capital compared unfavorably with cities in the US: St. Louis was far smaller than Mexico City, yet had 480 patrol cars (and almost twice as many police, to boot). Despite support for "motorizing" the police, officials still viewed the radiopatrullas as an auxiliary force rather than, as Basail had hoped, a means of replacing the foot police: the Jefatura (unsuccessfully) proposed expanding the service

²³² Concha de Villarreal, "Se arrumban los carros de radiopatrullas – El hampa se ha motorizado y nuestros gendarmes aún a pie," *Excélsior*, 17 January 1943. Quote: "En nuestro país los métodos de persecución y prevención de la delincuencia se han estacionado dos siglos".

to just sixty cars alongside over 10,000 gendarmes.²³³ It was not until the late 1950s that the police counted on a larger number of patrol cars.²³⁴

It is difficult to ascertain the reasons behind the practical demise of the radiopatrullas. *Excélsior* only obliquely commented that “the very modern radiopatrulla service was destroyed for reasons that we are not unaware of, but which it is irrelevant to point out,” and alluded to the general disorganization of the Jefatura.²³⁵ Several possibilities can be suggested. Given the Federal District’s evident unwillingness to fund the purchase of the cars in the first place, the service may well have been seen as too expensive to be maintained, especially as the second world war generated shortages and led authorities to emphasize political surveillance over quotidian patrols.²³⁶ As large parts of the city lacked telephones (as well as other public services), the centralized rapid-response system undoubtedly only worked as planned in a handful of neighborhoods, limiting its utility. It is also possible that, given how networks of police corruption often worked through close interpersonal contact (as will be discussed more in Chapter Four), the more disconnected radiopatrulla system may have been less amenable, at least

²³³ I have not been able to find the police informe in question, which was presented to the Consejo Consultativo de la Ciudad de México, but it is cited and discussed in some detail in two letters (15 October and 8 November 1947) by Raúl F. Cárdenas, who was commissioned by the President’s office to comment on several police reform proposals in late 1947. The letter from 15 October noted that twenty-eight colonias “quedan totalmente desprovistas de servicio” (from context it is clear that it refers to radiopatrulla service). His letters are included, along with a great deal of other material, in: AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 571, Exp. 545.22/16.

²³⁴ The exact date is unclear. In 1960, the jurist Lucio Mendieta y Núñez referred to the radiopatrulla as a new service. Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio*, 182.

²³⁵ Concha de Villarreal, “Se arrumban los carros de radiopatrullas – El hampa se ha motorizado y nuestros gendarmes aún a pie,” *Excélsior*, 17 January 1943. “[...] el modernísimo servicio de radiopatrullas fue destruido por razones que no ignoramos, pero que tampoco viene al caso señalar.”

²³⁶ Michael Lettieri has discussed parts shortages for city buses during the war. Given how many of the radiopatrullas were said to be languishing in mechanics’ shops, it seems likely that the police also suffered material shortages. See de los Ángeles Magdaleno and Navarro on the importance of political surveillance during the war. Lettieri, “Wheels of Government”; María de los Ángeles Magdaleno, “Documentos sobre la policía,” *Históricas* 77 (December 2006): 36; Navarro, *Political Intelligence*.

initially, to existing illicit networks that funneled bribes to higher officials—although there was certainly nothing to prevent radiopatrullas from engaging in their own acts of extortion.²³⁷

Whatever the cause, the failure of the radiopatrulla service to replace the gendarmería meant that much of the material work of the police changed relatively little by the mid-century. In contrast to cities like Buenos Aires, where the introduction of patrol cars and radios gave rise to concerns that, as Lila Caimari has written, “enclosed in their cars, connected to a central radio, the police might lose touch with common citizens,” the radiopatrulla’s failure meant that technological advances had a relatively limited impact on Mexican police in the era.²³⁸ Although the number of police agencies exploded in the postrevolutionary era, the foot gendarmes remained the most numerous corps by far. As in the Porfiriato, the majority of police continued to be stationed at street corners or to walk the streets on patrol. The 1941 Reglamento de la Policía Preventiva discussed gendarmes’ duties in ways that differed only little from the 1897 Regulations. Police continued to be tasked with a vast range of duties over public space and behaviors, ranging from keeping roads and sidewalks clear, surveilling centers of vice and suspected criminals, caring for the well-being of public spaces, and enforcing sanitary regulations (although they were reminded that health authorities had the final say in this matter, reflecting the expansion of other regulatory agencies).²³⁹ The regulation devoted extensive space to how police should protect the area around their assigned street corner.²⁴⁰ Indeed, as will be

²³⁷ For example, in 1945, Ignacio Rubio Sandoval accused radiopatrulla no. 18 of stopping and searching him without cause, falsely accusing him of murder, and then demanding a bribe to let him go free. AGN, TSJDF, Caja 3691, Exp. 657747: 26 January 1945, Abuso de Autoridad. For a similar crime, see: “Sección Editorial—Reorganización y moralización de la policía,” *El Universal*, 3 December 1942.

²³⁸ Caimari, *While the City Sleeps*, 117.

²³⁹ 1941 Reglamento de la Policía Preventiva del Distrito Federal, Arts. 8-13. Article 8 specifically described the fields of police work as “seguridad y tranquilidad públicas, cultos [meaning policing the separation of church and state], educación [ensuring that children attended school], ornato, salubridad pública y policía judicial [e.g., assisting the judicial police]”.

²⁴⁰ 1941 Reglamento, Art. 216.

discussed in the following chapters, court records from the 1930s and 1940s show that, for most gendarmes, police work continued to look similar to how it had in the Porfiriato—intervening in fights, checking vendors for regulatory compliance, keeping an eye out for the purportedly dangerous, and other tasks. Perhaps the main difference was that the city’s growth meant that some gendarmes assigned to peripheral or underpoliced neighborhoods preferred to ride the city buses along their patrol routes, rather than walk long distances.²⁴¹ This may have directed their attention toward incidents in and around buses and bus stops, and likely made it somewhat more difficult for capitalinos in such neighborhoods to find police, although this was a difference in degree rather than in kind compared to previous practices. For most residents, the gendarme on the corner—or on a regular patrol route—remained the most common point of contact with the police, and most police practices and duties changed relatively little.

Police Personnel

For all that moralization, reorganization, and technological improvement seemed to largely fail to modernize the police or end abusive practices, institutional changes did have an impact: although it hardly happened overnight, the police gradually professionalized, in a sense. The police force of the 1930s onward looked different from the Porfirian police, at least in some important ways. Police were better-trained, better-educated, and more likely to identify with the job than their Porfirian predecessors. However, while reformers had often argued that such

²⁴¹ See, for example: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2768, Exp. 584065: 1934, Lesiones (in which a gendarme riding a bus got off to intervene in a fight at a bus stop in Colonia Guadalupe Inn); *Ibid.*, Caja 3585, Exp. 644798: 1943, Lesiones (in which the victim in a tussle on a bus got a nearby gendarme to intervene); *Ibid.*, Caja 3939, Exp. 691584: 1947, Lesiones (in which two gendarmes assigned to patrol the entirety of Colonia Mártires de Río Blanco in Gustavo A. Madero to the north mentioned riding the bus through the colonia).

Similarly, a number of gendarmes used taxis to transport the people they arrested. See, for example: *Ibid.*, Caja 3398, Exp. 626999: 1942, Denuncia de Hechos; *Ibid.*, Caja 3536, Exp. 630479: 1943, Denuncia de Hechos; *Ibid.*, Caja 3541, Exp. 638998: 1944: Abuso de Autoridad y Robo.

changes would resolve the police problem, these developments ultimately served to more firmly entrench abuses and impunity.

The police force became better-educated over time, although to some degree this simply followed society-wide trends. At the start of the Porfiriato, despite regulations requiring police to be literate, many openly admitted in court cases that they were unable to sign their names. In 1878, a full two-thirds of the police questioned in court were illiterate.²⁴² After the 1879 reforms, police seem to have become more literate—in court, the vast majority were able to sign their names—but this may have simply reflected their fears of being fired by increasingly strict officials if they admitted illiteracy, and many of those who signed did so in a shaky scrawl that perhaps betrayed limited functional writing skills. Authorities complained that illiteracy was rampant, and judicial personnel at times seemed surprised by literate police—tellingly, when gendarme Diódoro Almanza gave testimony in an 1883 case, for instance, the clerk initially started writing that he was unable to sign, before having to cross that out when Almanza did, in fact, provide an elegant signature.²⁴³ By later years, illiteracy seems to have largely disappeared from the force.²⁴⁴ Formal education also seems to have improved by the 1930s, besides the growing number of gendarmes who attended the police academy (as discussed earlier). Although most court testimony did not include information about education, those police who were asked

²⁴² The 1872 Reglamento de Policía stated that police were to be literate (Art. 49).

²⁴³ On allegations of illiteracy, see: Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 107. On Almanza: AGN, TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 830: 1883, Contra el responsable de las lesiones inferidas a José López.

²⁴⁴ There are some indications that illiteracy may have persisted, although claims were likely exaggerated by authorities looking to burnish their own credentials. Jefe de Policía Miguel Z. Martínez claimed that the Escuela de Policía Uniformada he opened in 1941 (which, as mentioned earlier, was likely a mere rebranding of the existing police school) was necessary to train illiterate police who had been admitted “por errores de administraciones pasadas.” The initial cohort was only twenty students, and there is no indication that they were there specifically due to illiteracy, suggesting that the problem was less widespread than Martínez claimed. “Será creada en México la Estampilla del Bombero,” *Excélsior*, 25 January 1941.

all stated that they had attended school for some length of time, most commonly around four to five years.²⁴⁵

Certain factors remained more or less constant. Policing remained an almost entirely male profession, and a relatively young one, too, with the average age around thirty. They were also more likely to be single than the general population, whether in the Porfiriato or postrevolutionary era.²⁴⁶ Gendarmes continued to largely come from working-class backgrounds: mostly artisans (especially carpenters and shoemakers), with growing numbers of merchants (comerciantes) over time (although, as Diego Pulido Esteva has shown, growing numbers of clerical professionals also joined the police force, likely in the expanding police bureaucracy, from the 1920s onward).²⁴⁷ Police were far more likely than the general population to be migrants to the capital—by the mid-1930s, only about 12% of police were from Mexico City—with the majority coming from central and central-western states like Michoacán, Jalisco, Estado de México, and Guanajato.²⁴⁸ Such patterns suggest that, whether in the Porfiriato or the postrevolutionary era, most recruits were relatively young and quite possibly recent arrivals to

²⁴⁵ In this, police appeared to be similar to the bulk of the city's male population. The 1940 and 1950 censuses suggest that most men had received at least several years of primary education.

²⁴⁶ Although a *Policía Femenina* was established in 1930, they were a small minority in the force. All police who appear in the court record sample were male. Bailón Vásquez, "El Cuerpo de la Policía Femenil"; Rodrigo Meneses Reyes, "Mujeres en la policía: género y orden público (1930)," in *Los trabajadores de la ciudad de México 1860-1950: textos en homenaje a Cara E. Lida*, ed. Carlos Illades and Mario Barbosa Cruz (México: El Colegio de México; Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Cuajimalpa, 2013), 156–80.

On age and marital status: my sample is broadly consistent with Diego Pulido's data. Pulido Esteva, "Profesional y discrecional," 77; Pulido Esteva, "Los negocios de la policía," 12–15; Pulido Esteva, "Los gendarmes," 189–92.

²⁴⁷ Pulido Esteva, "Profesional y discrecional," 77; Pulido Esteva, "Los gendarmes," 189–92. As discussed below, police became less likely over time to describe themselves in court as anything other than police, making it more difficult by the 1930s to track their class background.

²⁴⁸ Of the 90 police found in the 1933-1938 court case sample who specified their place of birth, only 11 were from Mexico City. The largest sending state was Michoacán, with 16. General population data from the national censuses of 1921, 1930, 1940, and 1950 suggest that, consistently in the era, around half of the capital's population had been born elsewhere.

the capital, who turned to police work because it seemed preferable to the economic uncertainties of working-class life.²⁴⁹

However, in a major change, policing did increasingly become a longer-term career after the Revolution. During the Porfiriato, most police stayed on the job for only a short time, and when questioned, over half identified as another profession.²⁵⁰ In contrast, the bulk of the post-revolutionary police force was increasingly made up of officers who were in it for the long run. By the 1930s and 1940s, practically all police who were questioned gave their profession as police, indicating general identification with the job.²⁵¹ Some stated that they had worked as police for years.²⁵² For instance, Fernando Ortega García, a gendarme nicknamed “El Barrigón” (“the pot-bellied one”), indicated in 1934 that he had been on the police force for eleven years. He noted with pride that he had attended the Escuela Técnica de Policía part-time for six years, and that he had never incurred any disciplinary infractions.²⁵³ If earlier police had found the job

²⁴⁹ Some court records bear this out. Luis Peralta Olivarría, for instance, stated that he moved to Mexico City from Sonora in June of 1932. By the time he was brought before a court in December, he had joined the police. AGN, TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2627, Exp. 545915: 1933, Lesiones y Abuso de Autoridad (Appeal). On the uncertainties of work, see the Introduction and Chapter Four.

²⁵⁰ In Piccato’s sample from 1900-1931, 56% of police described themselves with other trades; the rate was 60% in Pulido Esteva’s 1900-1923 sample. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 255n33; Pulido Esteva, “Profesional y discrecional,” 77. See also: Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 119–21.

²⁵¹ Most of the relatively few exceptions were people who gave their occupation as the more generic “public employee” (*empleado público*) or simply “employed” (*empleado*). Only a handful described themselves as having held other jobs, but as currently being a police officer. For instance, gendarme Jesús José Vázquez described himself as a former farmer [*agricultor*] in: AGN, TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2626, Exp. 545590: 1933, Abuso de autoridad. José Guadalupe Rojas Torres described himself as an “oficial plomero” in: *Ibid.*, Caja 3825, Exp. 675025: 1946, Allanamiento de Morada. Miguel Ríos López described himself as a “chofer, actualmente Policía” (and had earlier worked as a barber), and Simón Espinosa Serrano described himself as a comerciante in: *Ibid.*, Caja 3883, Exp. 683127: 1947, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones, Violación.

²⁵² In 1942, gendarme Pedro Martínez Pichardo noted he had served for about fifteen years: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3409, Exp. 622083: 1942, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho, Lesiones. That same year, Enrique Aguilar Guadarrama and Remigio Espinosa Flores apparently had been on the force for about ten years, based on certain witness statements. *Ibid.*, Caja 3585, Exp. 644750: 1944, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones.

²⁵³ AGN, TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2755, Exp. 582131: Injurias y amenazas, 1934.

questionable at best as a source of honor, police like Ortega framed themselves as professionals deserving of respect.

In the course of questioning in 1933, Emilio Jiménez Reyes, a gendarme stationed in the northern district of Gustavo A. Madero, revealed much about the uneven pace of both professionalization and police careerism. Around the age of nineteen, in 1924 or so, he had joined the police. He had little formal education—he attended school for a year or two as a child—and may have been illiterate when he joined, although he learned to read at some point. When he enlisted in the corps, he only received “the military instruction that they generally gave”.²⁵⁴ However, he reported, two or three years ago—around 1930 or so—he “had come to learn his duties as a gendarme.”²⁵⁵ Yet whatever Emilio Jiménez Reyes thought about his having “learn[ed] his duties as a gendarme,” he gave his statement while being investigated on accusations of having physically beaten a pulque vendor, who claimed that he had been paying Jiménez off with glasses of pulque in exchange for tolerating illegal sales (as discussed in more detail in Chapter Four).²⁵⁶ As discussed earlier, reformers had hoped that professionalizing the police would reduce abuses, end favoritism, and encourage the dispassionate exercise of authority. However, while the police certainly “professionalized” in the sense of treating their job as a career requiring some degree of specialized training, professionalization seems to have merely further entrenched and normalized violence and corruption as an element of police profession.

²⁵⁴ “[...] la instrucción military que generalmente se les dá”. From: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2620, Exp. 554485: 1933, Contra un agente de la autoridad y abuso de autoridad. Jiménez stated that he had only attended school for a year or two as a child, and noted vaguely that he had learned to read at a later time.

²⁵⁵ “[...] que hasta hace dos o tres años ha aprendido a conocer sus deberes de gendarme”. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2620, Exp. 554485: 1933, Contra un agente de la autoridad y abuso de autoridad.

²⁵⁶ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2620, Exp. 554485: 1933, Contra un agente de la autoridad y abuso de autoridad. Jiménez was found not guilty.

To a degree, this can be seen in growing cohesion among police in cases of crimes by or against police—that is, in cases where it was particularly important to establish whether the police had acted correctly.²⁵⁷ From the Porfiriato into the 1920s, gendarmes were surprisingly willing to contradict each other in court, or sometimes even to confront each other on the street, speaking to their low level of identification with their coworkers or the job. In contrast, as police began to make more of a career out of police work, they became increasingly willing to testify on each others' behalf—not to mention support each other in other, often illegal or extrajudicial, ways.

Although some degree of police accordance in testimony is to be expected, a more detailed look at individual cases suggests that testimonial agreement was in part strategic. In other words, police became increasingly likely to straighten out their stories among themselves, and even to lie on each other's behalf, over time.²⁵⁸ During the early decades of the twentieth century, police were perhaps surprisingly willing to testify against their colleagues. For example, after the mounted gendarme Luis Ochoa tried to make a public order arrest in 1903 and provoked a minor riot, he faced accusatory testimony from not only an irate foot gendarme, but also from his own partner. Despite working together, fleeing the scene together, and having ample time to

²⁵⁷ It must be noted that police testimony in such cases was particularly important given a common procedural irregularity. In theory, witness testimony from people who were close (family or friends) to the victim or the accused was often not considered to hold probatory value in itself, as the witness's ties made them an interested rather than impartial party. However, courts generally did not act as though police might have similar ties with their colleagues, giving statements from police witnesses a high degree of probatory value.

Owing to the difficulty of measuring accordance quantitatively—as will be seen, court records were often complicated and involved changing testimony, disputes between separate police forces, or instances of scapegoating in which police might unite against a single, usually disliked, officer—this analysis is qualitative. It is based on some 113 cases of crimes by or against police from 1878 to 1947 where two or more police gave testimony. Notably, there were more such cases in the 1930s and 1940s, likely because 1) more police worked with a partner rather than on their own as in earlier years, and 2) the courts appear to have become somewhat better over time at getting police witnesses to testify (although there are many counterexamples).

²⁵⁸ This was particularly clear in cases where police not only described the same incident, but used the exact same language.

get their story straight, Ochoa's partner offered him no support.²⁵⁹ At times, police who were explicitly called as witnesses by other gendarmes instead testified against them.²⁶⁰ Even when gendarmes tried to back up their colleagues, they often gave radically inconsistent stories.²⁶¹ While a degree of mutual support between police on the streets was clearly a factor in at least some cases, presenting a united front in court took a degree of work that early-twentieth century gendarmes, who usually were only on the force for a short stint, were often too disorganized to carry out.

In contrast, police increasingly began to present a united front—both in court and on the streets—in later decades.²⁶² As police began spending longer on the force and came to identify

²⁵⁹ While Ochoa claimed that he had intervened to stop a man from mistreating his daughter, his partner said that Ochoa had begun harassing the man for no apparent reason. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0220, Exp. 038378: 1903, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones, Abandono de Empleo.

²⁶⁰ For instance, the gendarme J. Jesús Gil claimed to have called over another gendarme after a comerciante supposedly stole Gil's pistol, and said that the second gendarme would clarify matters. The second gendarme instead took a neutral position, claiming that he found Gil and the comerciante mutually accusing each other, so he simply arrested both. The other police involved in the arrest (as Gil and the comerciante were passed along a chain of gendarmes) also were quite willing to testify that Gil was obnoxious and rude on the trip to the Comisaría, although they notably also denied that Gil had slapped the comerciante in front of them as the latter claimed. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1197, Exp. 211203: 1913, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. Similarly, after a gendarme in Cuajimalpa was accused of beating a drunk man due to personal resentments, his efforts to get another gendarme to testify on his behalf came to no avail—the second gendarme simply denied having been present (despite the victim saying he had been there. Moreover, the police Commandant he called to give a statement on his behalf instead said that the gendarme had likely been drunk on duty. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0380, Exp. 067421: 1905, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones.

²⁶¹ For example, while the gendarmes in one 1904 case very conspicuously agreed that they had not caused the suspects' injuries, they presented entirely incoherent, mutually contradictory stories that changed drastically over time. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0318, Exp. 055489: 1904, Ultrajes a la Policía. After a woman was severely injured (losing an eye) while being arrested by police in 1913, the arresting gendarmes gave divergent stories: one claimed she had drunkenly tripped and fallen on one of their lanterns, while the other said she had attacked his partner, who had raised his baton to defend himself and accidentally struck her. Pressures mounted as the case proceeded, and the two insisted on different stories; eventually, one was found guilty. It should be noted that the intervention of two passersby who witnessed the injury may have helped keep the gendarmes from getting their story straight. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1265, Exp. 220886: 1914, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones.

²⁶² There were some earlier examples. In an example from 1878, for instance, a gendarme went for backup to deal with a drunken fight at a fonda. Two more gendarmes, as well as two firefighters, were sent. The gendarmes questioned all claimed that there had been a large group of people that viciously resisted their intervention with rocks and knives. In contrast, the firefighters said that they found two drunk, severely injured men who refused to go with the police (calling them *soplones*) but who agreed to turn themselves in to the firefighters. Notably, the comisario also appeared to suspect the police of abuses, sending in one of the gendarmes' blood-stained machete as evidence. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Amado Tellez, José María Tellez, and Sotero Portuquez, Riña y Heridas.

more with the job, disagreement became less common and, when it was present, increasingly stemmed from either disputes between separate police forces or instances of scapegoating where police united to pin the blame for collective wrongdoing on a single, usually widely disliked, officer (examples of both will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters).²⁶³ More and more, police who were questioned tended to back up their fellow officers, even if doing so meant agreeing to highly improbable sequences of events. Following a bungled, illegally-ordered raid on a purported brothel in 1945, for instance, Judicial Police unanimously agreed that they had faced staunch resistance leading to one agent's injury, although the court instead found that there had been no resistance and the agent had actually injured himself smashing a window to break in.²⁶⁴ Police cohesion propped up impunity: after gendarme José Inés Rodríguez was accused of violent abuses in 1936, for instance, prosecutorial staff witnessed a police sergeant attempting to hide Rodríguez's gun (which he had initially denied having with him) in an obvious cover-up.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ For example, in a 1934 case, two Preventive Police and one Judicial Police initially presented unified testimony to the effect that the man they arrested had insulted and threatened them, only for the Judicial Police agent to later deny that the detainee had done so (while the Preventive Police continued in their claims). TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2775, Exp. 595654: 1934, Resistencia a un Mandato Legítimo de la Autoridad, Ultrajes a Agentes de la Autoridad. Similarly, in a 1945 case, the Judicial Police (whose testimony was substantially congruent) called as a witness a gendarme of the Preventive Police. He instead testified against them. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3635, Exp. 650887: 1945, Contra Agentes de la Autoridad, Injurias, Lesiones.

Of course, scapegoating was only a sign of unity if done successfully. In contrast, in a 1931 case, two Comisiones de Seguridad agents were illegally detained by Preventive Police following a dispute with a gendarme. They filed charges after being released, leading to a series of splits in the Second Demarcación offices. The street gendarmes blamed the Cabo (a low-level officer), who blamed a Comisaría employee, and while the subsequent Judicial Police investigation blamed the Delegado de la Policía, who in turn blamed the station clerk. Such disorganization could itself possibly be strategic: lacking a clear target, the court appears to have largely washed its hands of the matter after the initial investigation, and the case fizzled out inconclusively. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2644, Exp. 548813: 1933, Privación de Libertad, Abuso de Autoridad.

²⁶⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3651, Exp. 652886: 1945, Lenocinio y Resistencia de Particulares.

²⁶⁵ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2866, Exp. 466053: 1936, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones.

Similarly, in a 1942 case a journalist and an accountant claimed that they were repeatedly abused and robbed by the Vigilantes del Bosque de Chapultepec (the police force tasked with patrolling Chapultepec Park). Among other charges, they said that, when they had gone to the corps' offices to file their complaint, a drunk officer had attacked them, only to be pulled off of them by the other officers, who told him, "Chucho, don't implicate yourself, you're drunk." The Vigilantes questioned all covered for Chucho, swearing that he had not been at the office that day. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3420, Exp. 624357: 1942, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones, Robo, Injurias.

As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, accusations of corruption became more frequent in the 1930s and 1940s, and corruption itself (and its protection through a code of silence) became increasingly organized among the police force.

Perhaps the most extreme example of what this growing cohesion among the police could mean came from a 1937 case.²⁶⁶ One night in working-class Colonia Peralvillo, two gendarmes went to break up a fight at the doors of a *vecindad*, only to hear shots fired. Manuel Rodríguez Vega, a resident, had heard the scuffle and fired in the air, thinking that thieves were attempting to break in (as the *vecindad* had recently been robbed). Believing themselves under attack, the gendarmes entered the *vecindad*. There was a confusing confrontation with Rodríguez—while the gendarmes said he had left his residence to shoot at them, he claimed that the police had burst into his apartment without identifying themselves and attacked him, leading him to fire in self-defense and injure one gendarme in the hand—before the gendarmes brought him out.²⁶⁷ What happened next was heavily disputed. As the police unanimously testified, Rodríguez's neighbors were so enraged he had shot a gendarme that they tried to lynch him, severely beating him with rocks and poles before the police (including a large number of gendarmes who arrived at the last minute, apparently by car) heroically calmed the crowd and saved Rodríguez's life. In contrast, Rodríguez, his family, and all of his neighbors who were questioned gave a different story. They said that, when the gendarmes had brought Rodríguez out of the *vecindad*, the street had suddenly been swarmed with police who severely beat him before taking him away in a car.

²⁶⁶ All references to the case are from: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3039, Exp. 521369: 1937, Lesiones, Contra Agentes de la Autoridad.

²⁶⁷ The case was further complicated by the fact that Rodríguez's residence had two rooms—an outer entryway that connected to the patio with a broken door that did not fully shut, and an inner room behind a locking door. Part of the discussion—between Rodríguez, his family, the gendarmes, and the neighbor that the police forced to help them enter—centered on whether the police had truly entered a private space or not. Notably, Rodríguez's testimony was supported by the bloodstains and bullet hole in the wall that investigators found inside his apartment.

More likely than not, the account of Rodríguez and his neighbors was correct, and the police had engaged in exemplary collective violence that highlights their sense of cohesion—especially against perceived threats.²⁶⁸ By bringing together a number of police to extrajudicially beat Rodríguez before his neighbors, the police sent a message to the neighborhood warning them against using force against police.²⁶⁹ In doing so, police performed a show of unity mirrored by their testimony’s later complete accordance, showing a united front. The case exemplifies how gendarmes’ growing sense of professional identity and willingness to support each other could foster abuses and extralegal violence. In this, professionalization failed to live up to its promises.

* * * * *

By the midcentury, a sense of deep-set weariness around the police problem set in. Even when papers like *El Gráfico* proposed reforms, they lamented that despite recurrent proclamations of change, “the years pass, the authorities change, and the police continue in the same state. The desired improvement never comes.”²⁷⁰ Especially by the 1930s and 1940s, newspaper columns regularly noted the ever-recurring cycle of reform and scandal and questioned whether police abuse, corruption, violence, and arbitrariness were so deep-rooted as to

²⁶⁸ Lynchings of criminals usually occurred in cases of crimes that were seen as particularly heinous and, crucially, when participants thought that the formal justice system would not punish the offender. Kloppe-Santamaría, *In the Vortex of Violence*, 63–88. Given the circumstances of the case, working-class capitalinos’ generally poor opinion of the police (and the case offers no evidence that the individual gendarmes involved had particularly good relations with residents—although they did live in the same colonia), and that Rodríguez’s actions were unlikely to go unpunished by authorities, it seems unlikely that Rodríguez’s neighbors would have attempted to lynch him. If anything, police who were seen as abusive stood the chance of being lynched themselves. Kloppe-Santamaría, 29–31 and passim.

²⁶⁹ In a similar case from 1942, in response to the shooting of a gendarme during a public order arrest, police in Ixtacalco detained the suspects with no food, threatened them at gunpoint, and severely beat them repeatedly while reportedly saying “a estos hijos de la chingada hay que hoderlos [sic] y si hubiera topado en mí los hubiese matado”. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3394, Exp. 624214: 1942, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones, Privación Ilegal de la Libertad.

²⁷⁰ Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, “Fue, es y será – Inaplazable mejoramiento del servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 3 September 1942. “Los años pasan, las autoridades cambian y la policía continúa en el mismo estado. La mejoría deseada no llega.”

be impossible to extirpate. Journalists wrote at length about the all-encompassing rot within the police force, which ran from the lowest foot police to the highest official and was sustained by networks of favoritism and *compadrazgo*. Police regularly ignored complaints of crime, or demanded fees to arrange illegal “compromises” between victims and criminals.²⁷¹ Gendarmes were forced to pay regular fees to their superior officers to receive productive corner posts in well-trafficked parts of the city, where they extorted the criminals, drunks, and vendors they came into contact with to meet their illegal fee requirements and augment their paltry salaries; vendors had even come to rely on such systems in order to avoid regulations.²⁷² However, observers seemed unable to envision new measures to address these recurrent problems. While Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, for instance, wrote a series of detailed explorations of the police problem, emphasizing the institution’s entrenched corruption, favoritism, and brutality, his proposals to remedy the situation were no different from previous attempts: moralize police personnel, end favoritism in hiring, improve education, and better coordinate the scattered police agencies.²⁷³

Increasingly, the problem was taken to be just a symptom of broader issues. When crime rates seemed to decline in the 1930s and 1940s, criminologists warned that it did not reflect actual changes in crime, but was the result of systemic corruption at all levels of the criminal justice system, from gendarmes to judges, that kept criminals from facing legal retribution and

²⁷¹ Ignacio Morelos Zaragoza, “La purga en la policía,” *Excélsior*, 10 April 1940.

²⁷² “El dedo en la llaga,” *Excélsior*, 25 April 1940; Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, “Fue, es y será – Algo más sobre el servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 26 March 1942.

²⁷³ “Fue, es y será – Algo más sobre el servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 26 March 1942; “Fue, es y será – Inaplazable mejoramiento del servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 9 September 1942; “Fue, es y será – Aspectos fundamentales del problema policiaco,” *El Gráfico*, 26 November 1942.

entering the statistics.²⁷⁴ In 1940, *Excélsior* asked three experts how to best resolve the problem of policing. Two of them—the penologist José Ángel Cenicerros and the jurist Francisco González de la Vega—concurred that there were obvious steps: better salaries, better training, better discipline. However, they said, it was clear that the real roots of the problem lay in the intractable corruption of the public administration and in the city’s uncontrolled growth beyond the government’s ability to provide services, and attempting to improve the police without attending to these broader issue was practically useless.²⁷⁵ Their pessimism highlights how the common points of liberal police reformism were simultaneously seen as an urgent necessity while being acknowledged as insufficient in the face of a deeper-rooted problem.

Conclusion

In the 1930s, noted *cronista* Salvador Novo discussed the shift from the old Gendarmería to the new Policía Técnica, framing their chief difference in terms of how the old and new police related to the neighborhoods they policed.²⁷⁶ Novo contrasted a deeply nostalgic portrayal of the old gendarmes with a critical take on the modern police. The previous gendarmes, he wrote, had been well-respected old men who looked over their own neighborhoods, knew and were

²⁷⁴ See, for instance: Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón, *La criminalidad en la República Mexicana* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1958), 89–93, 105, and passim. As Pablo Piccato points out, criminologists were not wrong to suspect that the declining crime rate was an inaccurate measure of actual crime. Statistics from health authorities on the number of deaths due to homicide suggest that the murder rate remained far higher than reported in crime statistics, and even increased over time. Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 275–76.

Police readily adopted this narrative, although with a catch, arguing that they themselves were quite effective at identifying and arresting criminals, but that legal leniency and judicial corruption combined let criminals go free with ease. See, for example, “La reunion de procuradores y la policía,” *El Nacional*, 13 May 1939.

²⁷⁵ “Como moralizer la policía,” *Excélsior*, 4 May 1940. A month earlier, the same paper had printed an article that argued moralization would be useless without attending to the broader problem of inefficacy and corruption in the judicial system. Ignacio Morelos Zaragoza, “La purga en la policía,” *Excélsior*, 10 April 1940.

²⁷⁶ Novo, “Acerca de los policías.” The essay was originally collected in the 1938 anthology *En defensa de lo usado y otros ensayos*. However, the essay’s contents and preoccupations—particularly its emphasis on the novelty of the Policía Técnica—suggests that it stems from rather earlier, perhaps in the 1920s.

known—or even loved—by all of their neighbors, and rarely if ever had to resort to violence, instead relying on the respect they engendered in all.²⁷⁷ In contrast, the modern era had no use for such gentlemanly behavior or close ties with neighbors. Instead, the new *Policía Técnica* was filled with young men who were less concerned with their neighbors' well-being than with snagging “the fat prize” of prominent thieves.²⁷⁸ The new, well-armed police were more likely to use “the persuasion of the police cannon shot” than “the dissuasion of the old gendarme’s counsel.”²⁷⁹ No longer did they have any real ties to the neighborhoods they patrolled: “Now the *vecinos* would only be those who lived in the vicinity. He [e.g., the police] would not, because when his shift was over, he would not return there for a while, to avoid growing the affective moss that covers stationary stones.”²⁸⁰ Novo’s nostalgia for the old Gendarmería, which was shared at times by other portrayals, was extremely idealized: as discussed above, the Porfirian police were widely viewed as unceasingly abusive.²⁸¹ But his assertion that the growing professionalism of the police had severed their ties with those they policed was also exaggerated, as will be shown in subsequent chapters. Far from a lost aspect of the distant past, Novo’s “affective moss” remained vital to much policing—although it was usually a good deal less affectionate than he claimed.

²⁷⁷ Novo described the typical old gendarme as “Un anciano tan conocido en el barrio por su honradez, por sus buenas costumbres domésticas, que la gente que acaricia a sus hijos y que saluda a su regordeta mujer, experimenta cierta dulzura agradecida al llamarle ‘vecino’.” Novo, 121.

²⁷⁸ “el premio gordo”. Novo, 124.

²⁷⁹ “[...] a la disuasión del consejo gendarmeril sucedió la persuasión del cañonazo policíaco.” Novo, 123.

²⁸⁰ “Ahora los *vecinos* serían únicamente quienes residieran en la vecindad. Él no, porque cumplido su turno, no volvería por ahí en mucho tiempo, para no criar el moho afectivo que contraen las piedras estacionarias.” Novo, 123.

²⁸¹ The 1951 film *El gendarme de punto* similarly contrasted a kindly, bumbling, but paternal old gendarme left over from the Porfiriato with younger, harsher police. The film is discussed in: Diego Pulido Esteva, “Policías,” in *Hampones, pelados y pecarices: sujetos peligrosos de la Ciudad de México (1940-1960)*, ed. Susana Sosenski and Gabriela Pulido Llano (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2019), 188–89.

Yet Novo was onto something in suggesting that policing had changed by the midcentury, even if these were subtle developments in many regards. In large parts of the city, patrol practices may have continued to look much the same as they had in earlier years: most police still were usually based at street corners and carried out foot patrols through neighborhoods. This was especially so in the densely-populated areas in and near the city center; in more distant areas of the increasingly far-flung city, police were perhaps more likely to ride a bus to get around their patrol zones. New technologies, like cars and radios, had only a limited impact on the bulk of quotidian police work, which remained characterized by the discretionary application of coercive power in a wide range of fields. But despite these continuities, the police force did change in important ways. Compared to their barely-trained and fractious Porfirian predecessors, who rarely served for longer than a few years, post-revolutionary police, especially by the 1930s onwards, received significantly improved training, more often considered their job a long-term career, and had a much stronger sense of collective identity—at least among their colleagues within their own police institutions. Although police had never exactly been likely to confront their coworkers' abuses, growing identification with the job made such instances increasingly rare over time. At the same time that police themselves became more internally cohesive, the number of police forces tasked with ordering the city and responding to crime proliferated, generating jurisdictional tensions and fractures. As the following chapters show, these developments subtly shifted the terms on which city dwellers negotiated policing and sought to use or challenge police power.

Despite these developments, the ways that observers understood the problems of policing changed relatively little. From the Porfiriato to the mid-twentieth century, the police problem was seen as multi-faceted, encompassing violence, inefficacy, corruption, and personalism. Far

from being the dispassionate enforcers of law hoped for by reformers, the police acted arbitrarily, engaged in favoritism and corruption, and regularly employed extrajudicial violence and threats. This situation was usually framed as the result of several causes: the poor quality, training, and morality of police personnel; institutional disorganization (all the more so with the proliferation of police forces); the failure to adopt up-to-date technology and techniques; and the broader crisis of Mexican modernity, whether that meant the purported backwardness of the population or the apparently intractable corruption of its public administration. These ways of understanding the problem located its roots within individuals, within police organization, or within society in general.

Yet what liberal reformist discourse on the police problem missed was the possibility that the real roots of the police problem lay elsewhere: in the quotidian relationships that emerged in police work, between police and city residents as the latter struggled to negotiate the application of laws and regulations, giving rise to extralegal, informal systems and practices of ordering the city within which police violence and corruption emerged as constitutive parts. Even when some observers discussed the workings of these informal, relational systems in detail, they continued to do so through the standard framings of the police problem: personal immorality, poor training, officials' unwillingness to confront corruption, and similar tropes. This is not to suggest that the usual themes of police reform discourse had nothing to do with the problem. Relative impunity within the force (despite moralization campaigns) undoubtedly made violence and corruption more acceptable, and the role of violence seems to have deepened with the increasing professionalization of the police force and the growing cohesion among police. But observers' continuing view of policing as fundamentally the straightforward enforcement of laws and regulations, rather than as a node of power that could be negotiated by the police and the policed

alike, meant that they could not but miss many of the underlying reasons for the police problem's intractability.

Chapter 3. **Negotiating Policing: Contested Uses and Extralegal Power**

On 27 November 1944, the seamstress Vicenta Guerrero García filed charges against her neighbor, María Mercedes Miranda, and the Ministerio Público (public prosecutor) agent in the First Delegación offices.¹ As Guerrero and, later, her witnesses stated, Miranda was the lover of a high ranking official—likely in the police and possibly even the Jefe de Policía, although there were many rumors and little certainty as to his exact identity—and used her connections to get away with mistreating her neighbors in the vecindad they shared near the Mercado Abelardo L. Rodríguez northeast of the city center.² For reasons that were never stated, she particularly hated Guerrero and on 17 November had viciously insulted her and beat her with a stick, injuring Guerrero's hand such that she could no longer work. However, when Guerrero went to the First Delegación to file charges, the Ministerio Público agent refused to hear her complaint owing to Miranda's connections; moreover, Miranda falsely accused Guerrero of tearing her clothes, and the agent harassed Guerrero with repeated summons. While heading in to comply with the latest summons, Guerrero encountered a gendarme on the street who warned her not to go to the Delegación as she would be arrested on false pretenses. She instead went to a military officer with legal training that she knew, who investigated and confirmed the gendarme's story and helped her to file charges—not at the First Delegación, but in the headquarters offices of the Ministerio Público.

¹ The following paragraph is based on: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3615, Exp. 648292: 1944, Abuso de Autoridad, Violación de Garantías, Lesiones, Golpes, Amenazas, Injurias, Calumnia.

² While Guerrero stated that Miranda's lover was both an Inspector in the Departamento Central (that is, the city government) and held a position in the Secretaría de Hacienda, her witness Fidela Luna de Cuellar stated that Miranda claimed to be married to the Jefe de Policía, while her other witness, Eulalia Sánchez Gómez, said only that Miranda was married to someone in the police.

The case may have been unique in many respects, but it nonetheless sheds light on one end of the range of possibilities of how capitalinos experienced police power. Certain aspects of Guerrero's story cannot be taken as entirely typical; notably, dating the police was hardly the most common route to their favor (although it did happen).³ But what was more common, and what the case exemplifies, is the operation of police power not strictly according to the legal rules of public authority, but according to the logics of interpersonal, private power relations. Not only did police power allow Miranda to harass her neighbors at will without fear of repercussion, but the streetcorner gendarme apparently knew enough about the matter, and was interested enough, to warn Guerrero. Even in the 1940s, a time of tremendous urban expansion, police often remained implicated in profoundly local social relations, especially in densely-populated central districts of the city like Guerrero's neighborhood. Most attempts by city residents to use police power were not as blatantly illegal or as indirect as Miranda's. However, they were nonetheless still inscribed in eminently local conflicts, understandings, and debates over the legitimacy of police intervention.

This chapter uses court records to trace how capitalinos negotiated police power as they sought to bend it to their own needs and purposes and, at times, to contain its abuses.⁴ In doing so, it seeks to move beyond understandings of policing as a field of control and resistance, to

³ For example, in 1905 Carlota R. Moreno stated that she was attacked on the Plazuela de la Palma by a drunk woman who was insulting other passersby. She complained to the gendarme stationed on the corner, but he refused as the woman was his amasia. TSJDF, S.XX., Caja 0386, Exp. 070305: 1905, Abuso de Autoridad.

⁴ On sources: specifically, this chapter is built off an analysis of over three hundred court files covering 1878 to 1947 (on sampling periods, see the Introduction). Slightly over half are for cases of either abuse of authority by police, or offenses against the police. These records are particularly useful for examining police-public relations, as well as for examining the policing of public order offenses, as most of these cases originated in attempts at police intervention for issues like public drunkenness, minor fighting, or similar matters. The rest are for a range of criminal offenses, with particular attention paid to cases of *lesiones* (physical injuries), the most common type of crime for the vast majority of the period under study. These records shed more light on popular uses of the police (and wider criminal justice system).

instead understand it as a field for the unequal and contested negotiation of power in which extralegal uses of authority and discretion were central.⁵ Historians of Mexican policing have often noted this centrality of discretion and extralegal force to police practices, but they have rarely analyzed it from the perspective of ordinary citizens, tending to focus more often on its instrumental use by the police and by would-be criminals and regulatory infractors.⁶ In contrast, historians of crime have at times drawn attention to city dwellers' efforts to selectively use police power, or to their support of extrajudicial violence as a means of justice in the face of an unfriendly legal system; however, they have not systematically grappled with the wider range of extralegal police practices and how capitalinos sought to use them, nor with their efforts to challenge certain abuses.⁷ As this chapter suggests, the extension of police power through the capital was an intensely negotiated practice that depended in large part on residents' efforts to strategically inject police authority into spaces and relations that otherwise would have been largely closed off. Capitalinos' efforts to use the police (and the broader criminal justice system) were highly conflictual and ranged along a continuum, from the selective deployment of the law and the police, to more personalistic uses of police power. At all points, they relied on the vast discretionary authority, especially over the spaces and behaviors of the working and lower

⁵ See: Chazkel, *Laws of Chance*.

⁶ For the most focused and developed examples, see: Pulido Esteva, "Los negocios de la policía"; Pulido Esteva, "El caso Quintana." For histories that have focused more on institutional changes, see: Pulido Esteva, "Profesional y discrecional"; Pulido Esteva, "Trabajo, clase y prácticas policiales en las comisarías de la ciudad de México, 1870-1920"; Santoni, "La policía de la Ciudad de México durante el Porfiriato"; Rohlfes, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City"; Davis, "Policing and Regime Transition."

⁷ Pablo Piccato's work has gone farthest in this regard: Piccato, *City of Suspects*; Piccato, "A Historical Perspective on Crime." Martha Santillán Esqueda has noted that, at times, "el sistema judicial era utilizado como mecanismo de venganza o para obtener beneficio personal," but does not systematically examine this, emphasizing instead the socio-cultural contexts of crime by women. Santillán Esqueda, *Delincuencia femenina*, 228.

Post-revolutionary studies of understandings of crime and justice have brought attention to the widespread legitimacy of the *ley fuga* (extrajudicial killings of suspects by police), torture, and of lynching, as well as widespread procedural irregularities, although such studies have often focused on spectacular murders that attracted public attention rather than more mundane police activities. Piccato, *A History of Infamy*; Kloppe-Santamaría, *In the Vortex of Violence*; Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio*.

classes, granted to the police. City dwellers' efforts to use the police, whether in legal or extralegal ways, were therefore invariably fragile and tinged with the possibility of violence. While police favor—whether purchased by a bribe or generated by some other, more interpersonal, means—could offer capitalinos a degree of protection or a means of resolving disputes in their favor, it also relied heavily on extralegal violence or its threat.

This chapter will first discuss how the slow-changing conditions of police work from the late 1870s to the mid-twentieth century fostered possibilities for negotiating the use of police power and discretion. It will then examine how the period from the Porfiriato into the 1920s—that is, the period before post-revolutionary reforms significantly reshaped the police force and, to a degree, the broader criminal justice system—witnessed the development of more or less stable patterns in how city dwellers sought to use the police in strategic, selective ways, and in how they sought to collectively confront certain police actions seen as abusive. To a significant degree, these patterns of negotiation persisted after the 1920s. However, extralegal uses of police power as a means of dispute resolution—through simple violence or mediation—gained in prominence in the 1930s and 1940s, generating their own patterns of violence at the same time that they offered a resource to get around an ever-more delegitimized formal justice system.

Police Work and the Conditions of Negotiation

The conditions of turn-of-the-century police work, as expressed in court records, gave space for countless acts negotiation. As discussed in the previous chapter, gendarmes were scattered throughout the city either at street corner postings or on regular patrol routes, allowing them to surveil a range of spaces while also making them accessible to capitalinos. Criminal codes, as well as police and municipal regulations, gave police wide latitude to make arrests for

mere suspicion along with a number of common activities—a number of people, for example, were arrested for blocking the sidewalk, talking with friends in public, or walking slowly.⁸ If all else failed, gendarmes could also simply file charges for resisting arrest, insults, or other offenses against the police. This allowed police power to be injected into practically any situation, for reasons real or contrived.⁹ After arresting (or “detaining,” as gendarmes technically lacked full arrest power) a suspect or a public order offender, gendarmes had to transport them through the streets to the nearest Comisaría, along with any witnesses or victims. Depending on whether the arrest occurred in the densely-packed and densely-policed center or on the more sparsely-policed periphery, there might be few other police on the route, and the journey could be a long one. Detainees were made to either walk with the arresting officer, or, in more central areas with greater police presence, were passed off (“remitted”) at each street corner to the next gendarme, to be sent to the Comisaría by a chain of police who often had little idea of the reason for or circumstances of the arrest. Such conditions gave ample opportunity for suspects to try to escape, for passersby to intervene, or for detainees to attempt to negotiate with gendarmes. Meanwhile, the public nature of most arrests and remissions made them into public spectacles. Large crowds often formed around the scene, especially if detainees struggled against the police or if gendarmes used force.¹⁰ City residents were not simply a passive audience to such spectacles, but

⁸ Police regulations are discussed in Chapter Two, and regulations on vending and public space are discussed in Chapter Three. The 1871 Criminal Code included, besides a number of crimes, an extensive list of minor infractions punishable by fine. *Código Penal de 1871*, Libro Cuarto, “De las faltas.” For examples of police intervening against people for purportedly blocking the sidewalk for walking slowly or talking with friends, see: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0289, Exp. 049996: 1904, Ultrajes a la Policía; *Ibid.*, Caja 0386, Exp. 07035: 1905, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones.

⁹ In Rio de Janeiro, Brodwyn Fischer has noted that laws and regulations criminalizing common practices meant that “the police could nearly always cook up charges against someone accused of violating the unwritten rules of neighborhood morality and conduct. As elsewhere, informal power was rooted in the ability to enforce the law selectively within large spheres of tolerated illegality.” Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 155.

¹⁰ For several representative examples of crowds forming around arrests and purported police abuses, see: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Dario Ramírez and Valentín Martínez, Escándalo y Golpes al Guarda 489; TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0015, Exp. 003458: 1900, Golpes y agresión a la policía, Abuso de Autoridad; *Ibid.*, Caja 1276,

they could intervene directly, responding to perceived abuses or violence by following police into the station to give testimony; the negotiation of police power was worked out not only by suspects, victims, and police, but also by passersby who may have had little to do with the initial incident.

The conditions of negotiation changed once in the *Comisaría*. If gendarmes were the key actors on the streets, police officials were the key actors in the *Comisaría*.¹¹ Detainees and victims were medically examined by station doctors, who bandaged wounds and checked for signs of drunkenness. They then gave an initial statement to the *Comisario* or another station official, who determined—if the suspect was not immediately released—whether the case was to be sent to the criminal courts (in which case the suspect was usually held in jail) or if it merited administrative punishment. *Comisarios* could also send detachments of gendarmes or investigative agents to carry out specific tasks.¹² The negotiation of police power in the *Comisaría* was less exposed to the public eye than street-level policing, and the balance of power in negotiations was accordingly different. Unlike gendarmes, who (as will be seen) often depended in their work on their ties with residents and as a final resort could be opposed with some chance of success, station officials held practically all the cards in their interactions with those who came or were brought into the *Comisaría*.

Exp. 222744: 1914, Lesiones; *Ibid.*, Caja 1731, Exp. 310504: 1922, Abuso de Autoridad, Homicidio; *Ibid.*, Caja 2623, Exp. 547542: 1933, Abuso de Autoridad; *Ibid.*, Caja 2749, Exp. 580990: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad; *Ibid.*, Caja 2866, Exp. 466023: 1936, Appeal, Resistencia de un particular, Evasión de preso, Injurias; *Ibid.*, Caja 2940, Exp. 470952: 1936, Lesiones y contra Agentes de la Autoridad.

¹¹ There were some possible exceptions. In one bizarre 1938 case, police were found to have bribed a random passerby to take the place and identity of a prisoner who had escaped before being sent from the station to jail. It is likely that the suspect escaped with police assistance, as the story the police offered—that he had taken off his sweater and thus passed unnoticed while other prisoners distracted the guards by asking how long they were to be jailed for—was not particularly credible. The cover-up was arranged by a *Cabo*—a low-ranking official, a step above foot gendarmes—although it is possible that higher police officials were also involved and simply never questioned. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3016, Exp. 558027: 1938, Abuso de Autoridad.

¹² On *comisaría* work, see: Pulido Esteva, “Trabajo, clase y prácticas policiales en las *comisarías* de la ciudad de México, 1870-1920.”

These patterns of police work changed, to varying degrees, in the post-revolutionary decades. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the bulk of gendarmes' work on the street looked much the same in 1940 as it had in 1900, although police personnel became increasingly cohesive by the 1930s. However, while the city center and its immediate surroundings continued to host a relatively high police density, police were far less common in the outlying areas; while this had long been a pattern, the city's rapid growth meant that an ever-expanding area of the city was relatively underpoliced, leaving residents with less certain access to gendarmes.¹³ Meanwhile, emergency medical services became more common, decreasing gendarmes' immediate role in responding to injuries. If it was common at the turn of the century for injured people to go to or be found by gendarmes, by the 1930s and 1940s case files increasingly began when injured people were taken to emergency medical centers without necessarily involving foot police.¹⁴ However, despite these changes, gendarmes' work often continued to depend on close ties with those around them, especially in the densely-populated central regions of the city.¹⁵

The greatest changes, however, occurred inside police stations. Comisarios lost a great deal of formal authority in reforms intended to limit abuses. In 1929, regulations barred police

¹³ Seeking to improve police presence on the periphery, authorities constructed a number of "casetas"—ostensibly small-scale stations—in 1931. The original casetas were little more than tiny huts in such poor condition that *El Nacional* described them as looking like "la misma Cabaña del Tío Tom," and in 1942 authorities constructed twenty-four larger, modernized casetas equipped with telephones and office spaces. "De la vieja caseta a la moderna," *El Nacional*, 21 December 1942. However, given the city's size, it should be noted that the relatively small number of casetas would not have fully extended service to the outlying areas.

¹⁴ See, for instance: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2915, Exp. 474083: 1936, Lesiones; Ibid., Caja 3389, Exp. 624624: 1942, Lesiones; Ibid., Caja 3603, Exp. 646970: 1944, Lesiones.

¹⁵ In one telling incident from 1935, for instance, police discussed how they had used a shoe-shiner, Enrique Flores García, as a *gancho* (literally "hook") to catch a purported violator of alcohol regulations, sending him in their stead to see if a vendor would sell him a drink she was not licensed to sell. Notably, the case was briefly derailed by an argument between the police and Flores over the nature of their relationship. Flores claimed that the police were his friends (describing their relationship as one of "amistad"), and further mentioned that they allowed him to ride in their car (undoubtedly useful for him, as he was missing a leg). The police, perhaps wary that acknowledging personal ties could jeopardize the value of Flores's testimony, denied that they had taken him in their car. Perhaps annoyed by this contradiction, Flores then accused the police of failing to pay him back for the drink. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho.

officials from imposing punishments for regulatory infractions, instead granting such authority to Jueces Calificadores.¹⁶ Similarly, in 1931 Comisarios lost their role in opening judicial processes, as the task of taking initial statements and beginning investigations was given over to Ministerio Público agents.¹⁷ However, the impact of these changes should not be overstated. At times, capitalinos were able to take advantage of the divisions between these institutions.¹⁸ But Jueces Calificadores and Ministerio Público agents, whose offices were often located in the same building as those of police officials, seem to have frequently worked closely with the police, including in instances of corruption and abuses.¹⁹ As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, the growing number of police agencies in the city and their frequent jurisdictional disputes to some extent allowed people to play different forces off each other, as they also did with different police offices.²⁰ Finally, police continued with some frequency to make arrests

¹⁶ “Acuerdo por el cual se establece el procedimiento que deberá observarse en la imposición de castigos por infracciones a los Reglamentos gubernativas de Policía y Tráfico,” *Diario Oficial*, 15 April 1929, 6-7.

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of this change, see: Quiroz Cuarón, Gómez Robleda, and Argüelles Martínez, *Tendencia y ritmo de la criminalidad*, 102–6.

¹⁸ For example, as will be discussed in the following chapter, in 1935 the street vendor María Galván Arriaga called a Ministerio Público employee to contest her arrest by police for purported violations of alcohol vending regulations. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho. For another instance of the Ministerio Público agent acting against police by interrupting and reporting their attempt to hide evidence of abuse of authority, see: *Ibid.*, Caja 2866, Exp. 466053: 1936, Appeal, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones.

¹⁹ A number of cases from the 1930s make it clear that each demarcación’s police, Ministerio Público, and Juez Calificador offices were all located together. See, for instance, TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2750, Exp. 581096: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad y Ataques a las Garantías Individuales; *Ibid.*, Caja 2859, Exp. 465397: 1936, Abuso de Autoridad. For examples of shared abuses, see: *Ibid.*, Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho; *Ibid.*, Caja 2976, Exp. 499459: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Robo.

Cases from the 1940s are more equivocal as to whether other officials shared office space with police. One case from 1946, for instance, made it quite clear that the police Comandancia in Colonia Guerrero was located at least a few blocks away from the Ministerio Público offices. *Ibid.*, Caja 3817, Exp. 673831: 1946, Delito Oficial. However, there are still a number of cases alleging coordinated abuses between Ministerio Público agents, police, and other criminal justice authorities. See, for instance: *Ibid.*, Caja 3418, Exp. 620357: 1942, Allanamiento de Morada, Abuso de Autoridad.

²⁰ For example, in February of 1921 a group of Policía Judicial agents attempted to forcibly confiscate a censored play, “Tren de la Ilusión,” from the Teatro Esperanza Iris. The theater manager called a Policía Preventiva Comisario, who attempted (with limited success) to keep matters from escalating. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1671, Exp. 299510: 1921, Abuso de Autoridad, Daño en Propiedad Ajena. Similarly, in a case that will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Four, a group of vendors filing charges against a gendarme went to the Jefatura de Policía instead of their local Ministerio Público or police offices, as they argued that the gendarme’s abuses were part of a wider

without following proper procedure, simply cutting the Jueces Calificadores or Ministerio Público agents out of the process.²¹

Much police activity took place not simply through formal legal channels, but through discretion over legal and extralegal uses of force and its threat. Police at all levels had a high degree of discretion in how to proceed in cases.²² Police regulations stressed that gendarmes were to employ dissuasion against small-scale infractors of order, and were to use their ostensible moral authority to urge those who were arguing to stop and reconcile or separate. Arrest was, in theory, to be a last resort in such cases (although regulations also ordered gendarmes to immediately arrest many people who caused public disorder).²³ Street gendarmes, empowered to define public order widely, could choose whether to make arrests for myriad offenses or whether to let offenders off with warnings.²⁴ Comisaría officials, at least prior to

pattern of mistreatment by the Ministerio Público and other police. Ibid., Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho.

²¹ For a typical example, see the off-duty gendarme Margarito Romero Muñoz's arrest for drunkenly firing a gun in the air (which he claimed was motivated by his having filed a complaint against a corrupt police official): TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3635, Exp. 650907: 1945, Abuso de Autoridad.

²² Sociologists of policing began to emphasize the role of discretion in the 1960s and 1970s. See, for example: Egon Bittner, "The Police on Skid-Row: A Study of Peace Keeping," *American Sociological Review* 32, no. 5 (October 1967): 699–715; Peter K. Manning, *Police Work: The Social Organization of Policing* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1977).

²³ Art. 51 of the 1897 *Reglamento de las obligaciones del gendarme* stipulated that, in the case of arguments, police were to "interpondrá su autoridad, amonestándolas para que se concilien y separen," separating them if they continued and only arresting them if they still continued. Similarly, Art. 48 ordered them to warn off those who said obscenities in public or did other acts "que ofendan la decencia y el pudor," arresting them if they continued. In contrast, Art. 57 gave a long list of people who were to be arrested immediately, including *ebrios escandalosos*, prostitutes who went out in public, people who shot firearms, and anyone who committed cruelty to animals.

Would-be reformers also often called for the police to act with discretion and to avoid heavy-handed arrests unless it was necessary. In the early 1920s, for instance, Modesto C. Rolland celebrated the police of Cleveland for purportedly helping drunkards home rather than simply arresting them, and called for Mexico City's police to show similar restraint. Rolland, *El desastre municipal*, 59–61.

²⁴ For example: In 1878, a low-ranking police official (Cabo de Vigilancia Camilo Prieto) came upon a group or several women drunkenly arguing in a fonda and made them leave, arresting them shortly afterward when he found them fighting on the Plazuela de Juan José Baz. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Benita Díaz, Adelaida Romero, Concepción Barrón, Barbara Flores, Adelaida Frago, Riña y golpes. Similarly, upon seeing two cargadores fighting in public in 1879, one gendarme first separated them and told them to go their separate ways. He attempted to arrest them when they started up again, only for the two to attack and disarm him, leading to the intervention of other police. Ibid., Caja 657: 1879, Dario Ramírez and Valentín Martínez, Escándalo y Golpes al Guarda 489. One night that same year, the police José María Rodríguez came across a soldier bothering a woman

1929, could choose whether to punish minor offenses through fines or with detention. Police at all levels could attempt to resolve disputes either through the formal structures of the law, by facilitating and enforcing extralegal *arreglos* (“arrangements,” as they were usually called), or through simple intimidation and less savory methods.

Class strongly shaped polices’ application of discretion. As scholars have repeatedly shown, the overwhelming majority of police actions were directed against the city’s lower and working classes, who were viewed with suspicion by criminologists and political elites and who were subject to regulatory scrutiny.²⁵ Respectable offenders, in contrast, generally counted on preferential treatment if they were arrested at all. The purported abuses that prominent civil engineer Rafael M. de Arozarena complained of in 1906—brusqueness, being kept waiting over an hour with the rest of the public, and being sent to jail on foot rather than by private coach—after he was arrested for striking a pedestrian with his car were entirely normal for working- or lower-class arrestees, but it was indeed unusual that he received the same treatment.²⁶ In 1915,

who sought to escape his attentions. Rodríguez first “lo persuadió a que la dejara,” but arrested the soldier when he soon returned and bit the woman. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Heridas, Cornelio Pérez. After a pulquería owner threw out a group of unruly customers one night in Colonia Guerrero in 1905, for instance, the gendarme Pedro M. León reportedly chastised them and told them to quiet down, only arresting them later when they began loudly arguing again. León’s testimony was supported by the pulquero. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0373, Exp. 064849: 1905, Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad. In 1905, gendarme Tomás Zamora claimed to have repeatedly warned the driver Alfonso Fuentes about several regulatory violations near Salto del Agua street in the city’s southwest. First, he forced Fuentes to move his carriage, which he had illegally parked in front of a brothel. Then, he chastised Fuentes for drinking in public, and went to tell off the nearby pulquería owner who had sent Fuentes the drink, and which point Fuentes reportedly struck Zamora and precipitously fled in his carriage. Ibid., Caja 0373, Exp. 064648: 1905, Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad. In 1922, gendarme Adolfo Pérez told off a group of drunk men who were loudly shouting in Colonia Santa María la Ribera; his effort to quiet them was met with violence. Ibid., Caja 1717, Exp. 307412: 1922, Ultrajes a Funcionarios Públicos.

²⁵ See, for instance: Piccato, *City of Suspects*; Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” esp. 172.

²⁶ AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Secretaría del Gobierno, Comisarías de Policía, Caja 1, Exp. 44: Complaint by Rafael M. Arozarena to Governor, 26 September 1906. Similarly, the arrest of a Tribunal Superior de Justicia judge in 1879 for public urination provoked a firestorm of recrimination, and the police were forced to issue an apology, despite the Secretary of Gobernación’s support for the police’s actions. Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 171.

Arozarena was an engineer of some prominence, being involved in dam-building and electric power generation. See, for instance: Rafael M. de Arozarena, “The Guadalajara Electric-Light Installation, Utilizing the

the Comisario from the 8th Demarcación—which included in its territory wealthier neighborhoods like Juárez and Roma—wrote to the new Governor to resolve the conundrum of how to treat better-off offenders. As he noted, the comisariás lacked separate holding cells for “people of a certain social position” who committed regulatory infractions like smoking on streetcars or urinating in public spaces. Usually, they were let off quickly after paying a simple fine. However, recent changes in regulations barred police from levying fines. The problem was obvious, he said: if he started detaining respectable offenders, the time spent in custody would harm their businesses and they would likely complain, yet he could not legally let them go for a small fee as he had done in the past. The Governor’s response was unhelpful, simply reminding the Comisario “that every person who commits an offense or infraction, should be punished without exception of their category [e.g., social position]”.²⁷ It seems likely that the police continued to regularly levy fines against wealthier offenders instead of arresting them.²⁸

It was in these contexts—of daily contact on the streets with police, of far-reaching penalization, of police discretionary authority, and of slow-developing changes in the police themselves—that the capital’s residents sought to negotiate the uses and limits of police power. They did so both through how they sought to employ police (and, to an extent, the broader criminal justice system), whether in legal or extralegal ways, as well as by how they sought to contain police abuses. The following pages will first trace broad patterns in capitalinos’ relations with police power from the late 1870s until the 1920s. As they show, city residents sought to use the police in selective, strategic ways that were also classed and gendered. The section further

Famous Juanacatlan Water Falls, 28 Km. Distant From Guadalajara,” *Transactions of the American Society of Civil Engineers* XXIX, no. 2 (1893): 689–94.

²⁷ AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Secretaría del Gobierno, Comisaría, Caja 4, Exp. 247: Communication of 10 December 1915 (and response, 13 December 1915).

²⁸ Marcos Bretas has noted similar patterns in Rio de Janeiro. Bretas, *Ordem na cidade*.

emphasizes the role of interpersonal ties with the police in shaping discretionary uses of power (whether for coercion or protection), as well as practices of collective opposition that sought to challenge police abuses. The chapter then turns to the postrevolutionary era up to the mid-twentieth century. As it argues, many of the basic patterns in police-public interactions remained broadly similar. However, extralegal uses of police power became increasingly visible and prominent, whether to mediate disputes or, more frequently, to engage in simple harassment.

Uses of Police and Judicial Power from the Late Nineteenth Century to the 1920s

It is clear from court records that capitalinos requested police intervention with some frequency. Based on a sample of sixty-six cases of lesiones and similar offenses from the Porfiriato, for example, police became involved because their intervention was requested in at least thirty-seven cases (56%), compared to twenty-three cases (35%) in which police intervened of their own accord upon seeing a fight or finding an injured person in public.²⁹ It is more difficult to determine how often police involvement was requested in the cases of public disorder and drunkenness that made up the majority of arrests. As administrative rather than judicial processes, such instances usually made it into court cases only obliquely, and administrative records often included few details on how police became involved. However, accusations of

²⁹ "Lesiones" was consistently the most common crime according to criminal statistics, making it a useful category for examining police responses to crime. The cases examined are drawn from two sample periods: 1878-1883, and 1900-1905. Many of the cases in the earlier period were classified interchangeably as "heridas" or "lesiones"; the sample also includes a small handful of cases of "golpes," which according to the 1871 Penal Code were less severe injuries than "lesiones," and some that started as "lesiones" or "heridas" cases before becoming homicides when the victim died of their wounds. Several "lesiones" cases came about not from witnessing a fight, but from simply seeing an injured person in public, as standard procedure was to detain the wounded and send them to the hospital with the hope that they would tell authorities the identity of their attacker. Requests for police intervention were usually made to the nearest gendarme, or less often by going to the Comisaría to file charges.

The remaining 9% of cases include instances where people bypassed the police to directly file charges before a judge, cases where the military rather than the police became involved, and a handful of instances of clearly accidental injuries that were witnessed by authorities.

public disorder were frequently the inciting incident in cases of abuse of authority or crimes against the police, allowing such cases to shed some light on patterns of police involvement. Unsurprisingly, in the majority of such instances, the police made the arrest on their own initiative upon seeing disorderly public conduct. However, in a sizeable minority of these cases, the police reported that their intervention had been requested by others.³⁰

In a number of cases, the police reported being informed of violence or disorder by unknown persons. This was especially common in cases of public drunkenness, fighting, or other instances of public disorderly behavior: from 1900 to 1905, for instance, out of a sample of 53 such incidents contained in court records, police reported being informed by people who were never identified in 17% of cases. Although this can be explained to some degree by urban anonymity—as discussed in the Introduction, most capitalinos carried out much of their lives in relatively circumscribed spaces, but the demands of sustenance and recreation did draw people further afield at times—in many cases silence was likely strategic. The police arrested purported witnesses to incidents with some frequency as a means of guaranteeing their testimony, and refusing to identify oneself to the police or to accompany them to the scene of an incident may have been a way to direct their attention to disorder without further implicating oneself.³¹

³⁰ In a sample of 190 cases from 1878-1947 where public disorder of some sort was given as the inciting incident, police intervened of their own initiative a little over half the time, although the percentage of cases in which others requested their involvement is likely overstated considering that the sample has some overlap with cases of lesiones (e.g., when police intervened in a fight of some sort that caused injuries).

Given that this sample is largely based on cases of abuse of authority and offenses against the police—that is, cases where police behavior was under scrutiny—it is possible that in some cases police lied about having had their involvement requested by others, in order to lend credibility to their claims. That said, there are numerous cases in which witnesses or victims testified to having requested police intervention, suggesting that the overall pattern still holds.

³¹ The foreign traveler William E. Carson noted in the late Porfiriato that the police “have a peculiar custom of arresting all parties in an altercation. If a policeman is called to arrest an offender the complainant will be arrested as well and marched off to the police station.” Carson, *Mexico*, 52. See also: Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 87.

Excluding instances where police intervened on their own initiative, the most common way for the police to become involved in a fight or interpersonal violence was through the complaint of the victim or their friends and family. As historians like Pablo Piccato have noted, fights between people of the same social position (class and gender) tended to be rather ritualized affairs with generally accepted rules about the violent defense of honor, including that disputes were to be resolved without outside intervention unless they passed certain accepted limits.³² Police and judicial officials often found that victims and suspects in cases of violence maintained strict silence, and even if they named their attacker, victims often specifically noted that they did not want to press charges.³³ Yet this was not universal, and, as will be seen, there were instances where capitalinos sought police but not judicial intervention, or vice versa. Tracing how and why such practices took place, then, sheds light on how capitalinos saw and shaped the legitimate scope of police activity.

Despite masculine violence being viewed as an acceptable means of resolving honor disputes, there were many cases where men (or their families) did request police (and court)

³² Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 80, 93, 98, and passim.

³³ For example: despite several witnesses claiming that the shoemaker Isidro Herrera had been stabbed by one of his neighbors in their vecindad, Herrera insisted that he did not know his attacker and that he did not want to press charges: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: Julián Martínez and Isidro Herrera, Heridas. After being found injured in the head in 1879, the *adobero* Mariano Espinosa gave the name of his attacker (a neighbor), but declined to explain the reason for the attack and asked that the court not charge him: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Mariano Espinosa, Heridas. After being stabbed while purchasing goods in a store in 1879, the domestic worker Zenon Romero denied knowing who had attacked him, and made it clear that he did not wish to file charges (“no pidiendose nada contra su heridor en caso de que parezca”): TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Heridas, Zenon Romero. Following a fight between two women in the vicinity of Tepito in 1900, police only found one of the women’s daughter at the site; although a large crowd had gathered around, presumably to watch the fight, police were unable to find anyone who would offer any testimony. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0023, Exp. 002531: 1900, Lesiones. After being arrested for public drunkenness, Gonzalo García was found by medical personnel to have a stab wound. However, he denied knowing who had attacked him and insisted that he had no enemies. *Ibid.*, Caja 0109, Exp. 019653: 1901, Lesiones.

intervention in their interpersonal disputes.³⁴ Going to the police may have been viewed as arguably dishonorable, but it nonetheless was a resource that could be drawn upon. Men requested police intervention for a variety of reasons, some clearer than others.³⁵ At times, men appear to have simply requested (or accepted) police intervention after they lost fights.³⁶ In 1900, for example, the day laborer Francisco Poblano went for the police after he lost a minor fight with his neighbor, the Spanish shop clerk Luis Rodríguez, apparently occasioned by the latter flirting with the former's amasia.³⁷ Although it may not have been viewed as a particularly honorable choice, doing so allowed a measure of vengeance. In some cases, it is likely that pre-existing interpersonal relations with police shaped their decision. In 1881, for instance, after a fight at his book stall with another vendor, José María Arroyo called upon the police to arrest his attacker and filed charges against him.³⁸ It is likely that Arroyo, who worked as a vendor and a cargador and in both roles would have been subject to heightened police vigilance, had developed some sort of working relationship with the gendarmes around him, as will be discussed for the case of vendors in Chapter Four. More straightforwardly, when gendarme Enrique Locano intervened against an attack on the cabinet-maker J. Guadalupe Ramírez in

³⁴ The following paragraphs focus on fights between men, as fights between women were much less common in court, although but some cases do suggest similarities to instances of fights between men. For example: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 707: 1881, Teresa Ramírez, Guadalupe Ariza, Marcela Lira and Paz Alarcón, Lesiones.

³⁵ In some instances, it is difficult to tell why men requested police intervention, as the incident does not seem to have differed much from cases where people refused police intervention. See, for instance: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0023, Exp. 002736: 1900, Lesiones (in which two male bakers accused each other of starting a fight between them); *Ibid.*, Caja 0212, Exp. 038291: 1903, Lesiones (in which two friends who had been playing a game of *albures* fought and mutually injured each other after one paid his debt with a counterfeit peso).

³⁶ In one case, although the injured man did not initially seek out the police (who arrived after an unknown person told them of a fight), he cooperated with them, including giving the name and physical description of his purported attacker. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0023, Exp. 002539: 1900, Lesiones.

³⁷ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0015, Exp. 003458: 1900, Golpes y Agresión a la Policía, Abuso de Autoridad.

³⁸ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 707: 1881, José María Arroyo and Tomás Estrada, Lesiones.

1914, for instance, he did so not just as an agent of authority, but as a neighbor and (possibly) as a friend.³⁹

In some instances, it seems likely that male victims requested police intervention because they believed the fight had been unfair or had occurred outside the usual bounds of the defense of honor. Being attacked by a large number of assailants could lead contenders to welcome police intervention.⁴⁰ While visiting a market in 1880, the housepainter Timoteo Reyes was approached by an irate colleague, Matías Puga, who accused Reyes of having stolen his work pail. Reyes tried to calm Puga and told him that the pail was actually in the possession of their mutual friend and coworker, Cristobal Romero (who was also present), but Puga had none of it and stabbed Reyes. Reyes not only pressed charges against his assailant, but also accused Romero of covering for Puga's escape. After the attack, Reyes had begged Romero to get a gendarme to chase Puga, but Romero had insisted on getting a priest so the gravely-wounded Reyes could make his final confession. Instead of bringing either priest or police, Romero disappeared for a month until he was spotted on the street by Reyes, who got a nearby gendarme

³⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1253, Exp. 218721: 1914, *Ultrajes y Lesiones a la Policía*. It is clear from the case that Locano and Ramírez knew each other and lived near each other, and that Ramírez did not resist Locano's intervention. The wife of the man who may have been Ramírez's attacker possibly believed that Locano was intervening on Ramírez's behalf, although her testimony is not entirely clear on this point. Adding to the complexity is that Locano was off-duty but in uniform, and he was heading to his post in a distant part of the city—he was not stationed near where he lived.

⁴⁰ For example, in 1878, the shoemaker Agustín de la Rosa was walking with his *amasia* when he stopped to use the restroom in a *vecindad*. Several people who lived and worked there attacked de la Rosa because he left the restroom in foul conditions. With de la Rosa outnumbered by his attackers, his *amasia* ran to get the nearest gendarme to defend him. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Agustín de la Rosa, M. Concepción Sánchez, and José M. Sánchez, *Riña and Golpes*.

Similarly, in 1882, Jorge Fuentes appeared to have relied on the idea of an unfair fight when he asked the *ronda* in Santa Cruz del Monte, Azcapotzalco, to arrest the family of rural comerciante Jesús Navarro for having all attacked him at once, although the Navarros convincingly argued that Fuentes had in fact threatened, insulted, and beaten several family members after María Anclina Navarro had broken off their relationship of *amasiato*. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 771: 1882, Jorge Fuentes and Aneclina Navarro, *Golpes*.

to arrest his former friend.⁴¹ Reyes's insistence on charging not only Puga but Romero suggests the ways in which lower- and working-class men did see legitimate uses for the police and the broader criminal justice system in responding to certain interpersonal conflicts.

Men were most likely to request police intervention in disputes that crossed boundaries of class or gender (at least beyond normalized patriarchal power over female dependents).⁴² After being struck by the engineer Salvador Echagaray during a dispute over a work bill in 1900, for instance, the carpenter Carlos Chávez went to the Comisaría to file charges—an action he likely would not have taken had Echagaray been an artisan or small comerciante rather than a member of the professional classes.⁴³ Higher-class men (and women) also used the justice system in response to challenges from lower- and working-class men and women; after the Spanish artist Mariano Mateos had his hat knocked off by the tamal vendor Mauricia Frías in a dispute over the lunch bill in Santa Anita on the city's outskirts, he went to local police to have her arrested and charged.⁴⁴ Similarly, albeit with the genders reversed, one woman (whose name was never given in the case file) went for police assistance after the shoemaker José Zúñiga Rodríguez violently ejected her from his home, where she had gone to offer his wife a job cleaning her floors (an offer that suggests the woman had a higher social position than the Zúñigas, although she was

⁴¹ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1880, Matías Rojas o Puga and Cristobal Romero, Heridas and Infracción de obligación. The court appeared confused as to why Reyes had had his friend arrested (even though the court had also earlier issued an arrest order for Romero in an attempt to get his testimony). Rather than ruling on whether Romero had aided in Puga's escape, the judge instead found him guilty of failing to comply with the first article of the 1871 Penal Code, which enjoined all those to see a crime to assist authorities and which, in practice, was never enforced (and indeed had no punishment listed), and let him off with time served (about a week in jail). For his part, Romero said he had fled because he was worried police would arrest him merely for having been present at the crime—an entirely reasonable concern, as the police regularly jailed people in such circumstances as a means of ensuring that they gave testimony.

⁴² This was not unique to Mexico. As Brodwyn Fischer has noted for Rio de Janeiro, men tended not to get police involved except in cases of "neighborhood conflicts with women or across classes—disputes that could not be honorably settled through physical fights." Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 375n5.

⁴³ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0041, Exp. 007533: 1900, Golpes.

⁴⁴ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 707: 1881, Mauricia Frías, Violencias Físicas. Beyond the reasons given above, it should be noted that Mateos may also have gone to the police because he was visiting an unfamiliar town.

likely not particularly wealthy). If Zúñiga argued that his use of violence to exert authority over his home and dependents was justified, as he did not want his wife doing such work, his wife's would-be employer believed that he had no right to strike her.⁴⁵

Women made use of the police with some frequency in response to domestic violence.⁴⁶ If patriarchal authority over the family was widely normalized, women (and their friends and family) at times sought to challenge violence that they saw as particularly abusive.⁴⁷ This was particularly the case for working-class women, as wealthier women had more resources to keep such matters private rather than invite public scrutiny.⁴⁸ Following the arrest of one couple for fighting in public in Tacuba in 1902, for instance, Sabina Rodríguez accused her husband

⁴⁵ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1731, Exp. 310504: 1922, Abuso de Autoridad, Homicidio. It is unclear from the case why Zúñiga was so opposed to his wife being hired as a domestic worker; he only said that he “no permitió esto.”

⁴⁶ Cases of men requesting police intervention against abusive wives and amasias were far less common, undoubtedly due to widespread support for patriarchal authority over dependents that gave men access to more accepted resources (such as the private use of violence) to deal with disputes. During the nineteenth century, law and judicial practice normalized masculine violence over women, especially viewing it as permissible if it was carried out in private spaces; however, women could also request legal separations from violent men, leading to much debate over what level of violence was seen as excessive. Ana Lidia García Peña, *El fracaso del amor: género e individualismo en el siglo XIX mexicano* (México and Toluca: El Colegio de México; Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, 2006), 64–70, 92. During the twentieth century, men's violence against their partners continued to be simultaneously criticized as abusive (especially when exposed to the public eye, as it usually was for the urban poor—the middle and upper classes were generally better able to keep domestic violence a private matter) and reinforced as an aspect of asserting patriarchal authority. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 113, 116; Santillán Esqueda, *Delincuencia femenina*, 237.

⁴⁷ For example, in 1878, Rafaela Prieto went for the police after her sister's amasio came home drunk and insulted and attacked both of them in their shared home in Tepito. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Juan Rangel, Golpes. In Ixtapalapa that same year, María Francisca Carabajal went to the local Juez de Paz to accuse her husband of stabbing her, specifically noting that there had been no reason for the attack. For his part, he claimed that he did it because his wife was carrying jars of water on the street, a reason that the judge found difficult to understand. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Román Zedillo and María Francisca Carabajal, Heridas.

⁴⁸ Ana Lidia García Peña has argued that, through an examination of separation and divorce cases from the nineteenth century—most of which also stemmed from accusations of domestic violence—that the majority of such cases were filed by members of what she terms the middle sectors, that is, people making between 500 and 3,000 pesos per year (a category including better-off artisans and established comerciantes as well as military officers and professionals). The wealthy preferred to keep such disputes private, while the poor lacked the resources necessary to pursue such cases (and many likely would not have been formally married, either). García Peña, *El fracaso del amor*, 77–79. In contrast, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, criminal cases for domestic abuse were more common among the working classes (including some artisans and comerciantes). Compared to costly divorce cases, the working classes had more access to police intervention and, to some degree, criminal cases.

Cresencio Ávalos of beating her every time he drank (which was often), and pressed charges.⁴⁹ Similarly, after her husband beat her for having taken longer than expected to purchase milk, causing a public scandal, Tomasa Tenorio got the gendarme who came to the scene to arrest her husband, and she filed formal charges in the Comisaría.⁵⁰ In other cases, friends or family requested intervention on women's behalf against perceived abuses (at times contradicting women who refused to press charges).⁵¹ In a case from 1902, three members of the Espíndola family (the father and son, both tobacco workers, and a daughter) got in a fight with Aurelia Hernández, a cousin who they accused of "bad living" (*mal vivir*, usually referring to prostitution); allowing Hernández to live with the Espíndolas likely was seen as threatening the family's honor in the eyes of the other residents of the vecindad. The altercation became increasingly violent, leading another woman in the Espíndola family to run for the police. Hernández's injuries were readily proven and the Espíndolas were found guilty, but the judge appeared to believe that their actions were somewhat justified by Hernández's dishonor, freeing two with warnings after a few days in jail and allowing the third's sentence to be covered by time spent imprisoned during the proceedings.⁵²

As the case suggests, involving the criminal justice system in domestic affairs, and thus exposing personal, private matters to public authority, was not taken lightly. In many cases,

⁴⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0169, Exp. 029660: 1902, Lesiones. Ávalos gave his occupation as *jornalero* (wage laborer).

⁵⁰ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0109, Exp. 019673: 1901, Lesiones.

⁵¹ In one case from Azcapotzalco in 1904, police reported that a couple's young child had gone for a gendarme to stop his father from beating his mother, the latter of whom simply refused to give any statement in court about the purported abuse. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0294, Exp. 056207: 1904, Ultrajes y Lesiones al Gendarme. In another case from 1900, after an incident of domestic violence, the police were requested by either an unknown woman or by the victim herself (testimony being unclear on this point). TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0049, Exp. 008762: 1900, Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad.

⁵² TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0144, Exp. 026455: 1902, Lesiones. The court process lasted a little under a month.

women only informed police reluctantly. In 1878, Dominga Sánchez was beaten by her husband because she did not have dinner ready when he arrived at home. While things soon quieted down, later that night her brother-in-law struck her sister, so she accompanied them both to the Comisaría. There she found that she was more injured than she had thought (perhaps explaining why she reportedly fell asleep in a corner at the station, much to the Comisario's confusion when she later awoke), and she was sent to the hospital. Her wounds were severe enough that she spent a full month there healing, finally requesting an arrest order for her husband upon her discharge.⁵³ Similarly, in 1904, María Dolores Olvera charged her amasio (a shoemaker) with beating her after she chastised him for gambling with her money. She told police officials that she had not filed charges at first, "because she did not want to harm him," but when her injury worsened in the days after the attack, she decided to formally file charges. Notably, despite living in the territory of the 6th Demarcación, and having a serious stab wound in her chest, she walked all the way to the 2nd Demarcación Comisaría, bypassing the closer 4th Demarcación station entirely. She perhaps believed that the farther Comisaría would be more distantly removed from the local context of her neighbors, friends, and family, who may have been inclined to take her amasio's side.⁵⁴ In many cases, women appear to have requested police intervention as a last resort against either severe or continuing violence, often in cases where they appeared to have few other resources.

⁵³ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Dominga Sánchez, Heridas. The Comisaría had apparently been swamped with arrests that night. Rather than admit that they had simply been overwhelmed, the Comisario instead quite bizarrely accused Sánchez of faking her identity and actually being her sister, and claimed (without any evidence beyond an injured Sánchez having fallen asleep at the station and apparently being abandoned there by her sister and brother-in-law) that all three of them were faking their accusations for unclear reasons. The court ignored the Comisario's strange claims.

⁵⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0290, Exp. 048722: 1904, Lesiones. Informing could lead to further violence: in one case from 1904, for instance, a large fight broke out between six women in Candelaria, apparently because one had informed on another's amasio. Ibid., Caja 0290, Exp. 048730: 1904, Lesiones, Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad.

In general, capitalinos often sought to use the broader criminal justice system, and not just the police, in idiosyncratic ways. Despite the legal and procedural codifications of the late nineteenth century, criminal courts retained some flexibility in how to deal with cases, especially minor crimes. Trial lengths varied considerably, and could be slowed or stopped by administrative inefficiency, but during the Porfiriato, the majority of cases for lesiones or fighting were over within a few months, and in some minor cases early on, judges used “verbal investigation” processes that sought to reconcile opposed parties within a single day.⁵⁵ The flexibility and relative rapidity of most cases, especially in earlier years, helped make the courts relatively accessible (at least compared to later decades, as will be discussed).⁵⁶ Women involving the courts against domestic violence, especially, often did so not through full use of criminal charges, but rather used it selectively. In many cases, women went before judges to request measures that stopped short of arrest, such as court orders that former amasios stay away from women and their families.⁵⁷ Some even used the courts to provide a formal backing to

⁵⁵ For examples of verbal investigations taking one to two days, see: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, José María Salazar, Faltas a la Policía; Ibid, Caja 633: 1878, Leandra García and Joaquín Galindo, Golpes Simples; Ibid., Caja 633: 1878, Abrosia Roales, Intento de Robo; Ibid, Caja 633: 1878, Agustina Chávez, Robo y Golpes; Ibid., Caja 707: 1881, José María Arroyo and Tomás Estrada, Lesiones; Ibid., Caja 707: 1881, Teresa Ramírez, Guadalupe Ariza, Marcela Lira and Paz Alarcón, Lesiones. Notably, these procedures seem to have been dropped by the late Porfiriato, suggesting that the courts became more rigid and slower over time; nonetheless, the majority of cases for lesiones and fighting in the 1900-1905 sample were over within several months. Official statistics are generally lacking. The 1905 yearly report by the Procuraduría claimed that 72.65% of all criminal cases were resolved in “days” (counted not from the initial complaint to the police, but from the case being taken up by the courts) and 26.39% in “months,” although these were extremely vague measures and do not appear to have taken into account cases that were still pending; the report undoubtedly sought to present the penal process in the best possible light. *Cuadros estadísticos e informe del Procurador de Justicia, concernientes a la Criminalidad en el Distrito Federal* (México: Ministerio Público del Distrito y Territorios Federales; Imp. Compañía Industrial Ascorve y Gayosso, 1906), 11–12, Cuadro 13.

⁵⁶ Some of these practices, such as verbal cases, were holdovers from earlier in the nineteenth century. On the accessibility of justice in early nineteenth century Mexico City, see: Flores Flores, *La ciudad judicial*.

⁵⁷ In 1878, Mercedes Castellanos sought a judicial order barring her former amasio, the soldier Leopoldo Calleja, from bothering her. Calleja was arrested shortly afterward after entering Castellanos’s home. He agreed to leave Mexico City in return for charges being dropped, but failed to leave the city—as he later noted, as a soldier he could not in fact leave his Battalion—and soon was arrested again for throwing rocks at Castellanos’s home and attacking a male schoolteacher friend of her family who was staying there. Once again, Calleja agreed to leave the city, and the charges were dropped. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 632: 1878, Mercedes Castellanos and Leopoldo Calleja,

informal arrangements set up outside the bounds of the law. In 1879 in Azcapotzalco, for instance, one couple came before the local judge after having a violent dispute that they blamed each other for starting. Although they disagreed about who was more to blame, they requested that the court warn each other against further offenses, and got the judge to certify a third party (apparently a neighbor or patron of theirs) to act as a guarantor who would bring the husband to jail if he struck his wife again.⁵⁸ Capitalinos also made use of court procedure in ways not anticipated by jurists. Rather than carrying charges through to sentencing, it was common to decrease or drop accusations after the defendant had been arrested by police, leading to their release after a usually comparatively short jail stay.⁵⁹ In one 1922 case from Colonia Guerrero, for instance, a working woman (she described herself as an *obrero*) requested police intervention after her brother-in-law struck her during an argument. She pressed for him to be charged, and also backed up the gendarme's claim that her brother-in-law had violently resisted arrest, but

Amenazas. That same year, the sisters Rafaela and María Isabel Prieto requested that the judge give a formal warning to the latter's amasio Juan Rangel after he arrived home drunk and fought with them. Although the Prieto sisters stated that they did not want Rangel charged, only warned against bothering them in the future, the judge sentenced him to fifteen days in jail. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Juan Rangel, Golpes. Similarly, Luisa Carreón initially demanded a formal warning against her former amasio after he raped her daughter, but ultimately filed charges, then dropped them after her former amasio spent three months in jail during the investigation. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Rafael Rosas, Estupro.

⁵⁸ AGN, TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1879, María Tomasa Casas and Alvino Picaso, Injurias. Unfortunately, as the case proceeded verbally, the file does not include much personal information about the people involved, making it impossible to specify the relationship between the couple and their guarantor.

⁵⁹ Mexico City was not unique in this respect. In Rio de Janeiro, working-class women, especially, fairly frequently made similar partial use of the criminal justice system in response to domestic abuse. Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 375n5. Such practices were not limited to domestic violence cases. For example, in 1880 Romana Rivero charged two of her teenaged daughter's friends with *corrupción de menores* after they apparently helped her run away from home and sleep with a man, but she soon dropped the charges after the girls spent a few nights in jail. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1880, Mónica Cortés and Jacoba Mendoza, *Corrupción de Menores*. Similarly, after the daughter of Xochimilco comerciante Tomás Morones ran away to Mexico City to live with a mounted policeman who had previously been stationed in their town, Morones carried out a private investigation and got the police to arrest the gendarme and several people who assisted in his daughter's escape. He dropped charges once it was decided that his daughter would marry the gendarme. *Ibid.*, Caja 707: 1881, Soledad Morones and Ramona García, Rapto.

after he spent a few days in jail, she changed her testimony and backed him against the police.⁶⁰

The case exemplifies how people sought to use such trial-length arrests as a punishment in itself, one that was quicker and easier to attain than a full conviction, but which could be less severe.

Police intervention into ostensibly private relationships and spaces, especially in domestic violence cases, was fiercely debated. Gendarmes, whose main task was public order, faced limits on their ability to enter private spaces like the home. The 1897 Regulation, for example, stated that police were to stay outside of homes unless they were called for, directly chased a criminal inside, or discovered a crime in progress.⁶¹ However, the working and lower classes, who often lived in crowded *vecindades* or temporary lodgings and who frequently worked in public spaces, rarely could count on privacy and were thus quite exposed to police intervention.⁶² As suggested earlier, domestic violence in public spaces was a frequent cause of police intervention, and working-class men often had difficulty covering domestic disputes with recourse to privacy.⁶³ In one 1904 case, for instance, the wage laborer Benito Moreno strenuously opposed police intervention after he was accused of beating his wife. Moreno emphasized that he had been in the private space of the *vecindad* patio, and argued that his resistance to arrest had been an entirely legitimate defense of self and home; he further dismissed the domestic violence as a simple fight with his family, implying that he had been well within his rights to exert patriarchal authority through violence. In contrast, police first claimed that their

⁶⁰ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1693, Exp. 303336: 1922, *Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad*. It should be noted that the worker was not entirely successful, as her brother-in-law was found guilty of offenses against the police.

⁶¹ 1897 *Reglamento de las Obligaciones del Gendarme*, Art. 62. Similar restrictions existed in earlier regulations, as well; see: “El respeto a la persona y al domicilio,” *El Gendarme*, 1 November 1879, 1-2.

⁶² Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 27–33, 116; Santillán Esqueda, *Delincuencia femenina*, 223–25.

⁶³ Besides examples discussed earlier, in 1899 the hatmaker Rodolfo Luna was arrested after fighting with his wife in public and violently resisting arrest. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0020, Exp. 003208: 1900, Appeal, *Agresión a la Policía y Lesiones*.

intervention into the home was justified—Moreno’s son requested their help, and neighbors testified that Moreno had been “making a scandal”—before instead claiming that the incident actually occurred on a road and thus entirely in public. Although Moreno was not charged with domestic violence—notably, his wife refused to testify against him—he was found guilty of violence against the police and received a relatively heavy sentence of just over a year in prison.⁶⁴

If such cases were relatively common among the working and lower classes, wealthier capitalinos had more access to privacy (and legal resources) and were quick to defend their right to exercise private violence in the few instances where it was challenged. In 1880, for instance, the relatively well-off pulque vendor José Rafael Villalpando accused judicial officials of abuse of authority. Villalpando fully admitted that he had threatened his wife with a pistol after discovering proof that she was having an affair with a municipal court secretary. After his wife’s sister called for help, the court secretary burst into Villalpando’s home with armed police and separated the couple for the night. Although the case was complicated—Villalpando switched places with his wife and reportedly caught the secretary trying to visit her that night, and filed a long list of other charges—Villalpando insisted that the initial intervention had been entirely illegitimate and argued that he had acted well within his rights to threaten his wife. Although the case’s conclusion is not included in the file, Villalpando did convince the court to take his charges seriously and to begin the judicial process.⁶⁵ In general, courts tended to give men of

⁶⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0294, Exp. 056207: 1904, Appeal, Ultrajes y Lesiones al Gendarme.

⁶⁵ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1880, Melesio Parra, Usurpación de funciones públicas, allanamiento de morada y amagos. It should be noted that, while Villalpando was wealthy enough to have a centrally-located, multi-room home in central Azcapotzalco with a number of domestic workers living nearby, there is no indication that he was a member of the elite. He may have simply been a rather well-off pulquería owner, or perhaps a pulque supplier or wholesaler. While he described himself as a *comerciante*, a term that could connote respectable status, others simply called him a *pulquero*.

higher status a great deal of leeway in matters pertaining to their own household, propping up their private uses of power.⁶⁶

Police intervention into working-class homes—especially in *vecindades*—stemmed in part from what seem to have been shared interests and, at times, personal ties, with those charged with watching over apartments. *Caseras* (essentially building supervisors, usually women) and doorpeople (*porteros*, who could be men or women) called upon the police with some frequency, whether to report thefts, to get the police to intervene in fights between residents, or to deal with disorderly activity near the building. It seems likely that such requests often built on patterns of habitual interactions with the police. *Caseras* and *porteros* regularly spent much of their time in fixed locations, allowing them to get to know police assigned to nearby corners or patrol routes. They also had other reasons to want to foster ties with the police. Their duties at times included maintaining order within the building and keeping unwanted people—including evicted tenants or vengeful *amasios* after domestic disputes—out of the residences, and police clearly could serve as a useful source of coercive power in such cases.⁶⁷ After the wage laborer José María

⁶⁶ For an example that did not involve domestic violence: in early 1879, Martín Larrea, a merchant working in a prominent French-owned trading house, went to court to begin proceedings against a domestic worker for theft, accusing her of stealing valuables from a box left in his care by a friend. The purported robbery had occurred a year prior, and Larrea made it clear that he did not believe it necessary to actually find the stolen goods or the domestic worker (who had left after he fired her). Rather, he wanted the court to take testimony from several witnesses (his nephew, his employer, and a colleague) saying that he had explained the incident to them at the time of the crime. In doing so, he evidently sought to certify that the domestic worker had indeed committed the theft, in order to combat rumors that he himself had been involved or was otherwise untrustworthy. The court dutifully recorded their statements and took no further action. AGN, TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Martín Larrea, Robo.

⁶⁷ An array of cases show *caseras* and *porteros* acting in such ways, whether on their own or with police intervention. In one case, the *casera* of a *vecindad* went for police help after a disruptive fight between two resident families: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Andres Cerón, Isabel Cerón, José M. Martínez, Josefa Chavarria, Riña y heridas. In another, a *portero* chased down a woman who stole clothes from a tenant's room while he sent his companion to get a nearby *gendarme*: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Ambrosia Rosales, Intento de Robo. In 1879, a Subinspector de Manzana arrested Felipe Suárez after he was found carrying a weapon in public and arguing with a *vecindad casera* about the whereabouts of his *amasia*, who had evidently run away from him after a fight: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Felipe Suárez, Faltas al Subinspector de Manzana. In 1900, the *casera* of a building called for police intervention upon discovering that one of her tenants had been injured by her *amasio*: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0009, Exp. 004130: 1900, Lesiones. In 1903, a fight broke out in a *vecindad* after the landlord ordered the *casera* to prevent one tenant from bringing rabbits into her apartment, after the rabbits were accused of

Becerril drunkenly shoved and injured his wife María de Jesús Quezada one night in 1879, for instance, the building casera saw that she was injured and called over the gendarme on the corner to arrest Becerril. As likely occurred in many similar cases, the casera knew that he must have caused his wife's injuries due to his frequent mistreatment of her, and she appears to have decided that his actions were a step too far.⁶⁸ Property owners who lived in the building similarly were willing to call for police aid against unruly tenants.⁶⁹ In other cases, vecindad residents themselves came together to collaborate with the police; after finding a suspicious man in one vecindad in the city's southeast in 1879, for instance, residents took him to the nearest gendarme and had him charged with illegal entry.⁷⁰ The extension of public authority through the city, especially into the private or semi-private space of the vecindad, often depended on the concordant action of residents and strategic alliances with local actors.⁷¹

Indeed, as historians like Pablo Piccato have argued, capitalinos themselves regularly acted against perceived crime within their local networks of neighbors, friends, and family, with or without involving the police.⁷² In 1904, for instance, when Josefa Rodríguez was attacked by her ex-amasio, Graciano Archundia, on the Plazuela de la Palma southeast of the city center, she

destroying other residents' cloth goods: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0232, Exp. 040526: 1903, Injurias. In 1905, a portera fought with her amasio after he criticized her for allowing children to play on the building stairwell, suggesting the expectation that caseras and porteros were to maintain some semblance of order within their buildings: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0386, Exp. 070344: 1905, Lesiones.

Pablo Piccato has also noted another reason why porteros may have gone to the police: they could easily become suspects if they did nothing in the face of petty theft or other crimes. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 150. For one such case, see: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Soledad Hernández, Robo (in which a casera was arrested on suspicion of theft from a tenant).

⁶⁸ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, José María Becerril and María de Jesús Quezada, Lesiones. Quezada did not wish to file charges against her husband, who she said she forgave, but did discuss at some length his long history of mistreatment. The casera was presumably aware of this, although she did not go into very much detail.

⁶⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1792, Exp. 323023: 1923, Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad.

⁷⁰ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 656: 1879, Jesús Manuel Romero, Allanamiento.

⁷¹ Similarly, shopkeepers and restaurant/drinkery owners and employers, who operated semi-public spaces (although they were quite exposed to police regulation) also requested police intervention with some frequency. Their relations with police will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

⁷² Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 148–52, passim.

said that those around her came to her protection. Rodríguez ran a bread stall on the plaza and lived just steps away, and undoubtedly personally knew many of those who were in the plaza that day. As she said in her initial statement, when Archundia attacked her,

“[...] the greater part of those present on the Plazuela de la Palma put themselves in motion, as the people of the *pueblo* of Mexico are accustomed to do, and then when Archundia began to pursue her, the *pueblo* went against Archundia, throwing rocks and containing him so that he could not harm her”.⁷³

Her statement must be taken with a grain of salt, as she was defending herself from Archundia’s claims that She had been the aggressor. Rodríguez clearly was employing language that she thought would be attractive and understandable to her judicial interlocutors, relying on common elite understandings of the supposedly customary volatility of the urban masses, but reframing it as a positive, protective trait.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, her claims rested on common knowledge that capitalinos could and did act individually or in concert against crime and violence, whether they went for police help or not.⁷⁵ Similarly, after the Tepito-based pulquería owner Juan Zarco was robbed of seventeen pesos by a group of knife-toting thieves in 1879, he successfully chased

⁷³ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0296, Exp. 052728: 1904, Lesiones. The quote in full: “que la mayor parte de los presentes en la plazuela de la Palma se pusieron en movimiento como acostumbre la gente del pueblo de México, y luego que se impusieron de la persecución que hacia Archundia a la deponente, el pueblo dió contra Archundia tirandole pedradas y conteniendole para que no hiciera mal a la que habla”.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Elsewhere in the case, Rodríguez also showed considerable skill in her employment of gendered discourses of respectability and her use of the courts. Although women were as a matter of course not asked their occupation when giving testimony (at least until the 1930s), Rodríguez self-identified as a “comerciante,” laying claim to a degree of status through her work. She also emphasized that Archundia was a terrible father to their two-year-old daughter Leonor, noting that she had broken things off with him when he proved himself unable or unwilling to provide for his child. She also repeatedly discussed the array of other times that Archundia had been arrested, including giving specific dates and names associated with one murder accusation against him, in the hopes that it would be easier for court officials to find relevant files. It is unclear from the case whether Rodríguez succeeded, as the file is incomplete. The cover suggests that she was eventually freed without being charged, despite Archundia’s accusations, but says little about Archundia’s fate.

⁷⁵ Besides the examples discussed in the paragraph, see also: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Francisco Acosta and Juan Jiménez, Asalto, Robo, y Lesiones (in which a number of charcoal producers from the area around Santa Fé far to the west of the Federal District rescued one of their colleagues after he was attacked by bandits, then tracked the bandits to the capital and got the police to arrest them); TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0136, Exp. 023605: 1902, Lesiones (in which Severo Ibáñez, after being attacked over a dispute by Serafin Palacios, ducked into the home of his neighbor Eusebia Brida, who blocked Palacios from shooting Ibáñez).

them down and stopped them with the aid of several other pulquería and shop owners in the neighborhood (one of whom used a pistol to disarm them), before handing them over to the police who had arrived late.⁷⁶

However, if such cases did entail a recognition of a legitimate role for the police and criminal courts, other instances highlight residents were aware of the dangers of police intervention. In one case from 1900 in Tlalpan, Tomás León heard screaming outside his home and found his neighbor, Juan Morales, beating his wife and son. Rather than go for the police, León instead approached his neighbor to calm him, “managing to pacify him, bringing him out to the street” and separating him from his family. León sat with Morales for some time, evidently to keep him from returning to terrorize his family. Although a gendarme did come to be involved in the case, at the request of either Morales’s wife or another female neighbor, León appears to have preferred to handle matters without their intervention. In any case, the gendarme was drunk and rude, and attempted to falsely blame Morales for breaking his lantern (which the gendarme had apparently shattered by accident). Morales fled and was nearly shot by the gendarme, who was prevented from shooting by the intervention of Morales’s son. The gendarme arrested him along with the day laborer Anacleto Flores, who happened to be passing by at the moment and was acknowledged to have had nothing to do with the incident.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1879, Juan Martínez, José María Calzada, and Juan Rodríguez, Robo. Notably, the initial police report appears to have inflated the role of the police, claiming that they were the ones to stop the thieves. The police claim is contradicted by all the comerciantes and pulquería owners questioned in the case.

⁷⁷ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0049, Exp. 008762: 1900, Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad. It seems likely that León’s ability to intervene was dependent more on his status as a neighbor of Morales, rather than on any higher status within the community. León’s occupation was never fully clarified—he was variously described as a “peon de albañil,” the “encargado de herramienta de la plaza,” and as a “bodeguero de la Plaza del Mercado”—and he was in other respects similar to Morales (both illiterate, married men in their late thirties or early forties, although Morales was a day laborer [*jornalero*]).

Such incidents were relatively common and suggest how the discretionary access to violence that was central to policing could easily worsen matters, especially for working-class Mexicans who sought to involve the police in their disputes. Women, in particular, were particularly vulnerable to sexual violence by police. One evening in 1904, seventeen-year-old María Concepción Araoz Díaz came to her job at a nixtamal mill in Colonia Santa María la Ribera (near where she lived) drunk after having celebrated a friend's birthday earlier. Her mother and sister also worked at the mill, and Araoz soon began quarreling with her sister, striking her. Her mother left to get the gendarme from the nearest corner, Ramón Torres, hoping that he would calm the situation before the mill owner arrived. However, rather than deescalate, Torres simply tried to arrest Araoz. Torres initially accused her of violently resisting arrest, tearing his jacket, and striking him. But his story did not hold up under investigation. The mill owner, who arrived during the incident, said that he did not see Araoz strike the gendarme, and that the slight tear of his jacket was an accident caused by the gendarme's own efforts to force her to go with him; he also emphasized that Araoz had always displayed good behavior as his employee. Araoz, for her part, admitted only to lightly slapping the gendarme in retaliation for his having groped her chest. Although Torres denied having done so, he eventually admitted that his jacket had only been accidentally torn and that she had only lightly struck him. While the Ministerio Público recommended proceeding against Torres for abuse of authority, the court evidently declined to do so, but did release Araoz. Yet her release came only after she spent over five months in jail, and moreover was subjected to an invasive medical exam meant to determine whether she was legally an adult.⁷⁸ As such cases suggest, police intervention inevitably carried with it the threat of not just legal violence, but also of abuse.

⁷⁸ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0296, Exp. 052762: 1904, Ultrajes a la Policía y Lesiones.

Interpersonal Ties

At the same time, that same ready use and abuse of police power also made it a potent tool in conflicts.⁷⁹ Although many instances of police violence were opportunistic or aimed at ensuring compliance with arrest, as in the cases discussed above, in other instances, police violence clearly emerged out of local connections and contexts. This is most obvious in cases of personal ties between police and other city residents. In 1878, for instance, after the carpenter Agustín Ávila got into a fight with his landlord Alberto Monterde—Monterde said it was due to Ávila's failure to pay rent, while Ávila accused Monterde of retaliating because Ávila had refused to let Monterde sleep with the former's wife—the local Inspector del Cuartel arrived with a group of Guardas Nocturnos and arrested Ávila. He claimed that he was beaten and mistreated by the police because Monterde was close personal friends with the local Inspector del Cuartel. Indeed, witnesses confirmed that Monterde and the Inspector regularly rode horses and took walks together.⁸⁰

But landlords, property owners, and other relatively well-off figures were not the only ones to have ties with the police that they sought to use during conflicts. Working-class capitalinos most commonly had social ties with street-level gendarmes.⁸¹ In 1903, for instance,

⁷⁹ As Brodwyn Fischer has noted in Brazil, "Ironically, this fear of the police's extralegal activities may well have been what made recourse to legal authority an effective coercive tool." Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 154.

⁸⁰ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 633: 1878, Alberto Monterde and Agustín Avila, Riña y heridas.

Similarly, in 1903 the fonda owner Luis Gudiño called over a gendarme to arrest a man for supposedly stealing a jar. The suspect claimed that the gendarme had notoriously close ties with the fonda owner, suggesting that the arrest was done for personal reasons.

⁸¹ To some degree, such cases can be difficult to prove, as gendarmes often tried to cover up their relationships with other case participants lest their testimony be discredited. For example, one gendarme in a 1901 case claimed that he had simply intervened in a fight between unknown men, yet others testified that he had in fact been drinking with two friends who began to fight, at which point he intervened. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0062, Exp. 010995: 1901, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones. Similarly, in 1914, gendarme Enrique Locano intervened in a fight on behalf of the cabinet-maker J. Guadalupe Ramírez. Although they did not claim to be friends, they lived near each other and clearly knew each other, and it is notable that Locano devoted much of his testimony to repeatedly

the laundrywoman M. Concepción Delgado went for the aid of gendarme José Pérez after arguing with a Spanish pawnshop clerk, Joaquín Escandón, over an iron she had pawned; she claimed that Escandón had made vulgar comments and partially disrobed during their argument. Pérez threatened Escandón with a pistol and struggled with him until other gendarmes arrived and disarmed him. Escandón claimed that it was well-known that Pérez and Delgado were amasios. While it would be easy to suggest that he was merely trying to discredit their testimony, it seems likely that they were in fact in a relationship of some kind. Not only was Pérez's anger at Escandón seemingly more severe than was usual in such cases, but Delgado appears to have specifically sought out Pérez to intervene rather than going to any of the gendarmes stationed nearby. Indeed, the gendarmes in the surrounding area likely had personal ties with Escandón, who they protected against Pérez (to at least some extent—they still sent Escandón to the Comisaría with the others, and he was eventually found guilty).⁸² In other cases, working-class people reportedly had ties with higher-ranking members of the police hierarchy; after gendarme Gregorio Barrientos was charged with abuses in 1905, for example, he claimed that his chief accuser, Carlota R. Moreno (whose occupation was never stated but who apparently was a food vendor of some sorts), had the favor of the entire Comisaría as she regularly brought officials there food.⁸³ Such cases also suggest how close personal ties between police and accusers were seen as delegitimizing police actions. However, given the wide scope of activities that were penalized for members of the lower and working classes, it must be recognized that police favor was not entirely necessary for getting the police involved, as a simple accusation of drunkenness

insisting that Ramírez had done nothing wrong. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1253, Exp. 218721: 1914, *Ultrajes y Lesiones a la Policía*.

⁸² TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0251, Exp. 041900: 1903, *Lesiones a un Agente de la Autoridad*. Gendarmes' ties with shopkeepers and vendors will be discussed in greater deal in Chapter Four.

⁸³ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0386, Exp. 070305: 1905, *Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones*.

or disorderly behavior by an opponent could spur intervention if the latter did not count on police favor.

Capitalinos' personal ties with the police also served as one means among many of negotiating discretionary protection. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, this was most clear in police relations with vendors; however, other capitalinos also could gain protective favor through personal connections. One evening in 1913 near Mercado de la Merced, María Pérez was arrested by the gendarme Eustacio Núñez, who claimed that she was drunk and disorderly and that she had struck him during the arrest. Núñez passed Pérez off to the next gendarme, Miguel Durán, so that he could bring her to the Comisaría, but Durán released Pérez as soon as Núñez was out of sight. However, Núñez had suspected that Durán would free her, and had sent Santiago Tirado—evidently a friend of his, although they strenuously denied any connection—to keep an eye on them. Tirado informed a police official, who re-arrested Pérez. In the subsequent court case, Tirado claimed that Núñez had told him that Pérez was a known friend of Durán, hence his suspicions (although Núñez himself never offered a clear explanation in court). Unsurprisingly, Durán and Pérez denied knowing each other, although their defenses proceeded in different directions. Pérez claimed that Núñez and Tirado had been together and had propositioned her, asking if she would go to a nearby hotel, and she responded to the affront by slapping Núñez, leading to her arrest. She further claimed that her freeing was not intentional, but that she escaped due to Durán's inattention. Durán, for his part, fully admitted to having freed her, but insisted it was because Núñez had given him incomplete information, telling him that she was under arrest for drunk and disorderly conduct and not mentioning the slap. As public drunkenness "was not a serious crime," he said, he claimed that he was well within his rights to free Pérez on his own discretion. Although Durán's claim contradicted the 1897

Reglamento de las Obligaciones del Gendarme, which explicitly stated that *ebrios escandalosos* were to be arrested immediately, leaving no room for discretion, the court still accepted his argument (as well as Pérez's, ruling that she had been within her rights to defend her honor against Núñez and Tirado).⁸⁴ The exact relationships between the interested parties may have been obscured as all sought to hide evidence of interpersonal ties that could damage their credibility. Yet it is clear that discretion, especially in the realm of the types of minor offenses that made up the majority of arrests, was defended by the police as a key attribute of their power, and its use was likely often shaped by gendarmes' broader social relations.

Opposition and the Negotiation of Police Power

City dwellers also sought to shape the uses of police power in less subtle ways. With some frequency, capitalinos came together to directly limit police actions that they saw as unjust.⁸⁵ Newspapers regularly complained that the city's population staunchly opposed the police; as mentioned in Chapter Two, pro-government accounts tended to blame the purported backwardness of the urban poor.⁸⁶ However, as the previous pages have suggested, capitalinos also regularly made recourse to the police in strategic ways. Popular acts of contestation are best understood not as uniform disdain for the police, but as selective actions meant to challenge

⁸⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1182, Exp. 201387: 1913, *Ultrajes a la Policía, Evasión de Preso*. According to Durán, he freed Pérez "teniendo en cuenta que por lo que era remitida no era un gran delito"). It should be noted that the court did not officially rule on whether Durán had discretionary authority to free Pérez. Instead, the judge found that there was no ground to charge him with helping a prisoner escape, as that crime only applied to the escape of actual criminals, and not to the escape of people who had merely committed a regulatory violation.

On the 1897 *Reglamento de las Obligaciones del Gendarme*, see Chapter Two. Article 57 specified gendarmes' duty to immediately arrest all *ebrios escandalosos*.

⁸⁵ Pablo Piccato has noted that excessive violence, in particular, could spark resistance. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 44.

⁸⁶ See, for example: "La depreciación de la policía," *El Siglo XIX*, 27 November 1889, 1; "Una falta de civilización," *El Siglo XIX*, 18 May 1892, 1; "Pasa de raya," *La Patria*, 18 May 1892, 3.

specific police actions seen as abusive. Unjustified arrests or unjustified violence during arrests could lead to capitalinos to collectively oppose the police.⁸⁷

Some degree of violence in arrests, whether by police or suspects, was seen as expected or justified. Many city residents made it clear that they considered minor resistance to public order arrests to be normal or tolerable, particularly if it occurred while drunk. In their affidavits, suspects and witnesses alike regularly made distinctions between violence against the police and simple resistance to arrest. If the former could perhaps justify, in the eyes of capitalinos, some degree of police force, the latter did not: struggling against arrest by refusing to move or similar actions was widely believed to not justify police violence, and courts at times were willing to excuse it, especially if simple resistance occurred while drunk.⁸⁸ Felipe Herrera, a metalworker arrested for public drunkenness in 1900, saw no contradiction when he said both that he had resisted arrest and that he had “behaved well” with the police.⁸⁹ Capitalinos, and to some extent courts, also often argued that proportional violence against police could be justified in response

⁸⁷ This section focuses on collective acts of opposition—that is, instances where one or more people not originally involved chose to intervene against police—as presenting the most clear expression of how capitalinos sought to negotiate policing in line with certain widely-held ideas of justice. Undoubtedly, at least some cases of individual resistance to arrest stemmed from similar beliefs, but in such cases it is often more difficult to distinguish whether opposition stemmed from common perceptions of justice or from other factors. Not all opposition to arrest met with popular support. For example, while Ezequiel Rodríguez Sánchez claimed that a crowd formed to oppose his arrest in Merced Market in 1913, witnesses in fact claimed that the opposite had occurred: Rodríguez was known to be a *ratero*, and so a number of vendors and customers assisted the police in bringing him into custody. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1182, Exp. 201338: 1913, Lesiones y Agresión a la Policía. On the idea of the *ratero* as a particularly pernicious figure in public discourse, see: Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 164–75.

⁸⁸ For several examples of cases in which suspects or witnesses differentiated between resistance and violence and argued that resistance did not justify police violence, at times convincing judges, see: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0289, Exp. 049996: 1904, Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad; *Ibid.*, Caja 0303, Exp. 057632: 1904, Ultrajes a la Policía; *Ibid.*, Caja 0375, Exp. 066515: 1905, Agresión y Lesiones a la Autoridad; *Ibid.*, Caja 1265, Exp. 220886: 1914, Appeal, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones.

Drunkenness was treated in criminal codes as an attenuating circumstance in sentencing. Piccato, 85–86.

⁸⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0020, Exp. 003230: 1900, Appeal, Lesiones y Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones y Agresión a la Policía. Herrera admitted to resistance but also said he “se comportó bien” despite the gendarme attacking him.

to police abuses.⁹⁰ In 1904, for instance, after being arrested for public drunkenness in Tacuba and accused of (lightly) striking and insulting the arresting gendarme, María Jean y de la Portilla accused the police of beating her first and attempting to take advantage of her drunkenness to sexually assault her. Dramatically telling the court that “God makes a stick for every dog” (*para cada perro Dios cría un palo*), an expression meaning that God punishes the wicked appropriately, she argued that she had “surely” acted in self defense; the court evidently agreed, quickly dropping the charges against her.⁹¹

Police violence was also often seen as justified by resistance to arrest, as long as police did not exceed certain limits, although this was debated.⁹² Courts ruled with some frequency in favor of gendarmes who admitted to beating unruly detainees as long as they did not cause lasting or serious injury and force was seen as necessary for the arrest or in order to uphold, as one 1900 case put it, “the dignity of an agent of authority” against suspects’ disrespect.⁹³ In one telling incident in 1924, three gendarmes were called to a home near Tlatelolco Plaza after a young man drunkenly fought with his brother. The man’s father (or, based on the last name,

⁹⁰ For example, Amador Tapia was accused of biting a gendarme who arrested him after a dispute in a fonda. He initially acknowledged that he had done so, but stated it was in self-defense, as the gendarme had beaten him. He later changed his testimony to deny having bitten the police. Tapia was initially found guilty, but he was absolved on appeal. Although part of the appeal decision rested on incongruities in testimony, the court did rule that the gendarme had in fact been bitten, but that Tapia had acted in legitimate defense against the gendarme’s abuses. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0213, Exp. 035524: 1903, Ultrajes a la Policía.

In contrast, while Juan Asención Ortíz claimed in 1904 that he had struck the police who arrested him due to their abuses, the court found his use of violence excessive and found him guilty of Excess in Legitimate Defense. Ibid., Caja 0309, Exp. 050673: 1904: Agresión a la Policía.

⁹¹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0326, Exp. 058694: 1904, Ultrajes a la Policía. Her statement (given in careo): “que seguro se defendió nada más, que su careante la pretendió burlar y que seguro se quiso vengar pero que ha de salir de la cárcel y que entonces verá como para cada perro Dios cría un palo”.

⁹² The 1871 Penal Code criminalized violence by authorities if it was done “without legitimate cause” (Art. 1002). Exactly what constituted “legitimate cause” was a matter of debate. *El Diario del Hogar* argued that drunkards’ refusal to go with gendarmes arresting them did not justify police violence. “Otra vez la policía,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 10 November 1891, 1.

⁹³ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0020, Exp. 003230: 1900, Appeal, Lesiones y Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones y Agresión a la Policía. Notably, the quote came from the appeal court, as the initial sentence found that the gendarme had in fact used excessive force.

stepfather) allowed the police into the home over the objection of the mother. As the man resisted going with the police, hiding under a bed, the gendarmes beat him to make him leave. Once they got him out onto the patio, he again threw himself to the ground to resist arrest, and at least one of the gendarmes repeatedly kicked him. One gendarme was initially found guilty of abuse of authority and injuries (*lesiones*); however, the appeal court ruled that only the second beating had been unjustified, as the man had already been removed from the room after the justified first beating. As it was impossible to determine which of the man's injuries had been caused by which beating, the court limited the charges to only abuse of authority, significantly reducing the gendarme's sentence.⁹⁴ Police who severely injured detainees or shot them were rather more likely to be found guilty, although their use of firearms could still be seen as justified in order to "conserve the prestige that the police should enjoy."⁹⁵

However, if the courts argued that violence could be necessary to prop up the "prestige" of the police, the wider population often disagreed. Police violence that was seen as excessive, or arrests seen as unjustified, gave rise to acts of collective opposition in the streets. On occasion, the social heterogeneity of the capital's public spaces allowed for ephemeral cross-class alliances against police abuses. While shopping in January of 1901, for instance, Esther Lobato, the

⁹⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1917, Exp. 347216: 1925, Appeal, Abuso de Autoridad con Lesiones. The original sentence was for one year and ten days in prison, which was reduced to one month of jail by the appeal.

⁹⁵ The quote comes from a 1901 case in which an off-duty gendarme was injured by a man and shot him in the foot. Although the gendarme was originally found guilty, he won his appeal, the court noting "la importancia social, que hay de procurar conservar el prestigio de que debe gozar la policia." TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0062, Exp. 010995: 1901, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones. Firearms were used relatively rarely by police (at least for shooting—in a number of cases police used pistols to beat suspects). In a 1914 case, gendarme Manuel Herrera was found guilty after shooting a fleeing man suspected of attempted robbery. Notably, the police themselves seemed to have realized that Herrera acted excessively; numerous other gendarmes who were at the scene arrested him without incident and there is no indication that they attempted a cover-up of any sort. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1274, Exp. 222889: 1914, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. Similarly, the court ruled against one gendarme accused of injuring a drunk woman so severely that she lost an eye in 1913: *Ibid.*, Caja 1265, Exp. 220886: 1914, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. Pablo Piccato has noted that gendarmes, fearful of arousing popular anger, usually tried to avoid shooting their weapons: Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 44.

daughter of a prominent doctor, witnessed gendarme Rodrigo Sierra beating José González in a shop near the Merced Market.⁹⁶ Lobato grabbed the gendarme's club and chastised him for his cruelty, then forced him (and the injured man) to come with her to the nearest Comisaría, where she filed a statement against the police. Authorities took her seriously and Sierra was found guilty of abuses, despite filing an appeal and a cassation attempt. His defense attempted to discredit Lobato by claiming that, as "a nervous Señora, delicate because of her sex and social class," she must have been swayed by her passions and was simply unable "to witness with serenity a street incident that must have frightened her".⁹⁷ Despite the defense's attempt to normalize police violence and to use Lobato's class and gender against her, her status as woman from the respectable classes undoubtedly loaned credibility to her testimony, and clearly shielded her from police violence—in cases where working-class capitalinos similarly intervened, the police sometimes responded by simply beating them, especially if they grabbed gendarmes' weapons as Lobato had done.⁹⁸

If Lobato's intervention highlights the capital's possibilities for cross-class contact, most interventions against abuses and arrests were made by lower- and working-class capitalinos and built on eminently local relationships. Popular contestation often relied on networks of neighbors, friends, and family members. In court testimony, the family and neighbors of those

⁹⁶ Discussion of the case based on: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0097, Exp. 019184: 1901, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. The incident is discussed in "Gendarme sentenciado," *El Imparcial*, 24 July 1901, 3. Lobato, described in the case as "una señora decente," had interest in the sciences herself. She submitted a proposal to the government about the draining of the Valle de México, attempted without success to patent a device to preserve pulque, and, after her father's death, defended his work from criticism in the press. "Cabildo," *El Popular*, 5 August 1897, 2; "Amparo contra un Ministerio," *El Popular*, 4 November 1899, 2; "El microbio del tifo," *El Popular*, 11 August 1908, 3.

⁹⁷ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0097, Exp. 019184: 1901, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. "una Señora nerviosa, delicada por su sexo y clase social"; "presenciar con serenidad un hecho callejero que la ha de haber asustado".

⁹⁸ For instance, when Ruperta Flores tried to defend her husband from police in 1914 and reportedly grabbed their weapons, they responded by striking her. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1253, Exp. 218721: 1914, Ultrajes y Lesiones a la Policía.

arrested often reported receiving word of arrests, frequently before the police had brought the detainee very far. Information could travel quickly through a neighborhood, allowing people to quickly come together to oppose an arrest.⁹⁹ Family members and spouses (or *amasios*) often took the lead in opposition.¹⁰⁰ When Francisco Luna, a baker living near the Santo Domingo Church to the north of the city center, was beaten by a gendarme after a dispute, his *amasia* Brigida Cárdenas ran to his defense after receiving word of the attack. Notably, the court considered her defense of Luna to be entirely justified even though it did not find that the gendarme had acted abusively.¹⁰¹ In 1900 in Tlalpan, police detained the day laborer Francisco Morales after he helped his father escape arrest. Morales claimed that he had intervened specifically because the gendarme, who he accused of being drunk on duty, had drawn a pistol to shoot his father. As with Brigida Cárdenas, the court soon released Morales, tacitly recognizing a right for family members to protect each other against police violence.¹⁰²

In many cases, *capitalinos* explicitly took action against police violence and perceived abuses of power. Residents often demanded that police stop beating detainees, questioned their authority to arrest them, or took other steps to prevent or mitigate police violence.¹⁰³ For example, when two gendarmes beat a drunk young metalworker in 1900 in Colonia Guerrero after he resisted arrest, a crowd quickly formed. Members of the crowd, including the man's

⁹⁹ For examples of word of police violence or arrests traveling quickly, see: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0014, Exp. 001067: 1900, *Ultrajes a la Policía*; *Ibid.*, Caja 1253, Exp. 218721: 1914, *Lesiones y Ultrajes a la Policía*.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0375, Exp. 0066515: 1905, *Agresión y Lesiones a la Autoridad* (in which a woman's sister-in-law appears to have come to her aid after the former was arrested for drunkenness).

¹⁰¹ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Francisco Luna, *Heridas y Agresión a la policía*.

¹⁰² TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0049, Exp. 008762: 1900, *Ultrajes a un Agente de la Autoridad*.

¹⁰³ For another example: in 1902, while police were bringing two working-class women to the *Comisaría* on charges of aggression toward the police after they were arrested for regulatory infractions, the day laborer Jesús Martínez intervened, saying that he felt compelled to "advocate" (*abogar*) for the women upon witnessing the police abusing them. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0148, Exp. 027507: 1902, *Ultrajes a la Policía*. The court found the gendarme's claims unsubstantiated and dropped the charges of offenses against the police, although charges against the police for abuse of authority do not appear to have been filed despite the defendants' claims and their medically-certified injuries.

mother, chastised the police. Based on later testimony, many in the crowd were particularly angered by how one gendarme struck the man from behind without giving him a chance to protect himself, and some reported that one of the police rather dramatically claimed “that he not only had orders to beat him, but to break his soul.” The police also treated the assembled multitude imperiously, striking one man who tried to intervene. But the crowd was persistent. One or two men took it upon themselves to bring the drunken man to the Comisaría, tailed by the gendarmes, believing that doing so would prevent the police from continuing to beat him.¹⁰⁴ That they believed the police station would be a place of safety for the man suggests that, to some degree, they thought of police violence as the product of specific abusive gendarmes rather than systemic; at the very least, they hoped to make police officials live up to the law and the rhetoric of police reformism.¹⁰⁵

Indeed, many public interventions against police were explicitly aimed at upholding the law against police brutality. On the Plaza de Garibaldi one night in 1913, passersby saw a drunken woman struggling against two gendarmes. One of the police severely injured her (she later lost her eye from the wound) and, according to witnesses, attempted to flee when he saw what he had done. Two men who had witnessed the incident forced the other gendarme to detain his partner and bring him into the Comisaría, where the men gave statements about his abuses; their testimony was crucial in the court finding the gendarme guilty and imposing a serious sentence.¹⁰⁶ Such cases evinced a determination on the part of the broader population to ensure

¹⁰⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0020, Exp. 003230: 1900, Lesiones, Abuso de Autoridad, and Agresión a la Policía. The metalworker’s mother testified that one gendarme said “que no solo tenía orden de pegarle sino de romperle el alma, y entonces le dió de bastonazos.”

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter Two for a discussion of police reformism and individualizing framings of the police problem.

¹⁰⁶ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1265, Exp. 220886: 1914, Appeal, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. Unfortunately, as the file in question is an appeal, many details about the identities of the men are not documented, leaving their relationship to the injured woman unclear. Notably, the woman herself claimed that she had been trying to bring shoes and a shirt to her amasio, who had been arrested for drunkenness, only for the police to arrest her as well.

that police acted according to the law. Similarly, after gendarme José Orozco Ojeda shot the shoemaker José Zúñiga Rodríguez in Colonia Guerrero in 1922 during a struggle, the scene quickly attracted a crowd, including Zúñiga's son alongside numerous other residents. While Orozco, who had every reason to present himself as the victim, claimed the crowd attacked him, other gendarmes who soon arrived stated that the assembled multitude was not violent, but simply demanded Orozco's arrest and pursued him when he tried to flee. At the crowd's urging, the other gendarmes arrested Orozco (although the court eventually ruled that he had not committed abuse of authority, as Zúñiga had struck him first).¹⁰⁷ Indeed, from the Porfiriato into the 1920s, crowds frequently distinguished between abusive gendarmes and other police. In one case from 1903, a crowd near Salto del Agua street in the city's southwest threw rocks and chased off two mounted police who had violently attacked a passing couple for no apparent reason. The crowd's actions were clearly targeted specifically at the abusive mounted police; a foot gendarme stationed nearby also intervened (and testified in court) against them, and apparently came to no harm from the crowd.¹⁰⁸

In coming together to challenge police abuses, capitalinos often sought to limit police violence and promote accountability for wrongdoing. However, collective opposition should not be romanticized. At times, capitalinos' confrontations with the police stemmed from misperceptions or perhaps even from broader defenses of private uses of power. In a case from 1900 near the Plazuela de San Sebastián in the city's northeast, Agustina Ramírez requested that police arrest her husband, Gabino Salas, for mistreating her while drunk. While the gendarme

¹⁰⁷ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1731, Exp. 310504: 1922, Abuso de Autoridad, Homicidio.

¹⁰⁸ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0220, Exp. 038378: 1903, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones, Abandono de Empleo. The foot gendarme's anger at the mounted police also was undoubtedly shaped by the fact that the latter had been transporting several prisoners at the time, who they abandoned when they fled, leaving the foot gendarme to collect and watch over the prisoners.

was bringing the two to the Comisaría, they passed their friend Victor Gutiérrez, a shoemaker, and his brother. Believing the police to be arresting both Salas and Ramírez without cause, Gutiérrez and his brother asked that they be released and began struggling with the gendarme, who fired his gun in the air to signal for help. A crowd of family, friends, and neighbors formed quickly, possibly joining in fighting with the gendarme, while two other police arrived, arresting Gutiérrez and his parents, and also bringing in a youth—apparently a relative of Ramírez—who impeded Gutiérrez’s effort to hide his knife. During the struggle, Salas escaped. Although Gutiérrez said nothing about Salas’s purported mistreatment of his wife, it seems doubtful that he would have been entirely unaware. Moreover, the struggle highlights divisions among the neighborhood residents, not only over whether Ramírez was right to get the police involved (as seen by Gutiérrez’s intervention), but also over whether Gutiérrez had acted properly (while his parents apparently supported him, Ramírez’s young relative backed up the police with his actions).¹⁰⁹ Regardless of the exact reasons, collective action against an arrest in this case served to block Ramírez’s efforts to use the police to confront her husband’s violence.

* * * * *

As the above discussion shows, from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s, capitalinos sought to employ the police, as well as the broader criminal justice system, in selective, strategic ways. Police and courts did not operate in a vacuum, but were one tool out of many available to residents of Mexico City. Police authority was not absolute, nor always acted in a top-down

¹⁰⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0014, Exp. 001067: 1900, *Ultrajes a la Policía*. Most members of the crowd were not arrested or questioned. While Gutiérrez’s statement provides the most detail as to his reasoning, his parents J. Félix Gutiérrez and Virginia Morales were also arrested and said they had gone to see after being told by a young girl of their son’s arrest; they denied having been part of the crowd at the beginning of the confrontation. Fourteen-year-old Agustín Ramírez (his relationship to Agustina Ramírez was unstated, although he may have been her son) also said that he arrived only upon hearing gunshots as the gendarme fired in the air to call for help during the struggle with Gutiérrez. Notably, he picked up Gutiérrez’s knife

manner. The state did not monolithically exercise power, even within Mexico City. Its agents were often confronted by city residents, who frequently challenged actions seen as abusive and who could draw on alternate power structures. Moreover, residents sought to use their personal ties with the police to shape uses of power and discretion; at times, policing appeared to proceed more according to interpersonal interests than the logic of state authority. But neither was the state nonexistent, or a simple relic of discourse. For capitalinos, the authority of the state and its agents was a situationally useful resource that they could inject into the local spaces and social relations of the vecindad, the callejón, the pulquería, or the family. Yet while they often sought to selectively and strategically use police authority and the broader criminal justice system, their ability to do so was constrained. The police (and courts) acted with a high degree of independence, and efforts to use them could easily spiral out of control into greater violence and greater disruptions to their lives and livelihoods.

Police Power to the Midcentury: Extralegality, Mediation, and Harassment

Many of the basic patterns established during the Porfiriato held much the same into the mid-twentieth century.¹¹⁰ Capitalinos continued to use police in strategic ways, including to contain domestic violence seen as excessive or to deal with disputes that could not be resolved through interpersonal fighting.¹¹¹ They also continued to use courts in idiosyncratic ways, such

¹¹⁰ For representative works on crime and responses to crime in the period, see: Piccato, “A Historical Perspective on Crime”; Santillán Esqueda, *Delincuencia femenina*.

¹¹¹ For an example of a man filing charges after being attacked by a large group: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3939, Exp. 691584: 1947, Lesiones. For examples where men filed charges against men of a different social status: Ibid., Caja 2617, Exp. 544010: 1933, Lesiones (in which a cowhand on a ranch near Tlalpan charged a wealthy lawyer and stable owner with invading his lands and beating him); Ibid., Caja 3010, Exp. 521134: 1937, Lesiones (in which a literate driver charged an illiterate construction worker); Ibid., Caja 3530, Exp. 635631: 1943, Lesiones (in which two construction workers charged a pulquería owner with striking one of them). For examples of cases filed due to cross-gender, non-domestic disputes: Ibid., Caja 3603, Exp. 646970: 1944, Lesiones (in which a mechanic and his amasia accused a seamstress of unexpectedly attacking them out of jealousy). For examples where police were asked

as dropping charges (or simply failing to show up to continue cases) after suspects were initially arrested.¹¹² Networks of neighbors, family, friends, and simple passersby also continued to come together to collectively confront police abuses with some regularity.¹¹³ Many of the spaces and circumstances around police intervention continued to follow similar patterns as before, largely concentrated in the densely-policed central zones of the city.¹¹⁴ After the Revolution as before it, attempts to use the police could readily devolve out of control into escalating violence.¹¹⁵

Finally, despite the city's continual rapid expansion, police often continued to be known actors at

to intervene in domestic disputes seen as excessively violent or otherwise outside of certain bounds: Ibid., Caja 2866, Exp. 466052: 1936, Lesiones y Ultrajes a un Agente de Autoridad (in which a tortilla-maker got an off-duty gendarme to intervene against a drunk man in her vecindad who, the man claimed, was beating his wife in the vecindad patio because she had seemed sad after he reprimanded her); Ibid., Caja 2984, Exp. 499573: 1937, Agresión a la Policía, Lesiones (in which a gendarme arrested a man after others complained that he had publicly struck his girlfriend for playing basketball).

¹¹² For example: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2816, Exp. 443943: 1935, Lesiones; Ibid., Caja 2871, Exp. 466886: 1936, Lesiones; Ibid., Caja 3022, Exp. 520351: 1937, Lesiones.

¹¹³ When a gendarme threatened and insulted a hotel security guard who he blamed for the theft of his pistol, another hotel worker and her son intervened to prevent the dispute from escalating to violence. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2755, Exp. 582131: 1934, Injurias y Amenazas. A crowd intervened to protect a shopkeeper from a gun-wielding gendarme after they got into an argument over illegal alcohol sales: Ibid., Caja 2749, Exp. 580990: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad. A crowd also formed around the rubber worker Hilario Jiménez Guevara, and his wife María Escobar Rodríguez, after police were called because they had been arguing with a shopkeeper. Notably, the crowd fought with the police, reportedly after the gendarme treated Escobar, who was pregnant, with violence. Also notably, the two gendarmes were dramatically rescued from the crowd by a third who was riding a bus and ordered the driver to go to their aid. Ibid., Caja 2940, Exp. 470952: 1936, Lesiones y Contra Agentes de la Autoridad. On plainclothes Policía Judicial agent was blocked from carrying out an arrest by a large crowd after he failed to identify himself. Ibid., Caja 2866, Exp. 466023: 1936, Resistencia de un Particular, Evasión de Preso, Injurias. A Policía Auxiliar was accused of attempting to take advantage of a drunk woman and of beating the man who was walking her home; a number of other men intervened. Ibid., Caja 3426, Exp. 624511: 1942, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. Gema Kloppe-Santamaría has also noted a number of instances of lynchings of police. Kloppe-Santamaría, *In the Vortex of Violence*, 30–31 and passim.

Popular interventions were not limited to acting against the police. After a group of railway workers began arguing with gendarmes in Plaza Garibaldi one night in March 1942, a crowd formed to help the gendarmes arrest them. The crowd was forceful enough that one witness stated that he thought they were going to lynch the offending workers, although this appears to have been an exaggeration. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3402, Exp. 626929: 1942, Contra Agentes de la Autoridad, Lesiones.

¹¹⁴ On crime rates in the center and the periphery, see: Norman S. Hayner, "Criminogenic Zones in Mexico City," *American Sociological Review* 11, no. 4 (August 1946): 428–38.

¹¹⁵ While arguing with his wife in the city center in 1937, the housepainter Ricardo Ahumada Roldán went to the nearest gendarme to ask that he "keep things from going too far." However, Ahumada had relatively little power to ensure that the police would act as he hoped, and was simply arrested and charged with crimes against the police when he resisted. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2976, Exp. 499460: 1937, Delitos contra la Autoridad, Lesiones.

the neighborhood level; just as in earlier years, though, close contact with police could lead to abuses just as readily as it could to protection.¹¹⁶

However, there were subtle changes in relations between capitalinos and the police. As discussed in Chapter Two, police became increasingly cohesive as a group, making it increasingly difficult for capitalinos to challenge abuses through legal means unless they went to a different police organization for aid.¹¹⁷ Most notably, if the majority of Porfirian court cases for crimes by or against police stemmed from disputes over the legitimacy of police violence or intervention, in the postrevolutionary years a growing portion of such cases involved accusations of corruption, favoritism, or uses of police authority for extralegal ends. Changes in corruption, especially in relation to the policing of vendors, in these years will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Instead, the rest of this chapter will focus on exploring other extralegal uses of police power, uses which in many cases were likely shaped by corruption but were not reducible to it. Such uses of police power took multiple forms, from harassment through the selective application of the law, to naked threats and illegal violence, to the informal mediation and resolution of disputes.

¹¹⁶ In one telling case from 1937, the gendarme Ramón Alonzo Ludie was accused by his neighbor in a Colonia Guerrero vecindad of attempting to seduce her and her daughter and subjecting them to constant harassment after they turned him down. He, in turn, claimed that they were disruptive neighbors who resented him for his efforts to peacefully resolve disputes in the vecindad. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3039, Exp. 521177: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad. Similarly, in 1944 Alfredo Hernández Molina knew the first name and address of the gendarme who he accused of robbing and beating him in Colonia Emilio Carranza; likewise, Delia González de Ferrer knew that gendarme number 724 was nicknamed “El Guero,” but that knowledge did not stop him from threatening her son at gunpoint. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3634, Exp. 650750: 1945, Abuso de Autoridad, Robo, Lesiones; *Ibid.*, Caja 3782, Exp. 669519: 1946, Abuso de Autoridad, Amenazas.

On the other hand, when a gendarme attempted to extort Leopoldo Beltrán Arroyo and Elena Romero Flores in Colonia Guerrero in 1947, among the neighbors who attempted to help them gather the required bribe was another gendarme, Antonio Hernández Méndez. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3904, Exp. 686318: 1947, Delito Oficial, Cohecho.

¹¹⁷ For example, Delia González de Ferrer complained in 1946 that her son had been threatened and nearly robbed by a drunk gendarme outside her home in Colonia Guerrero. While she asked two other gendarmes who came by for assistance, they refused to help, as did the Fifth Delegación offices when she called them. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3782, Exp. 669519: 1946, Abuso de Autoridad, Amenazas.

It is difficult to systematically analyze *arreglos*, as mediated extralegal agreements were termed when they (attempted to) fully resolve disputes, as they rarely appear in court cases. Those instances that entered the court record did so, as will be seen, in part because they failed to satisfactorily resolve matters. It can be safely assumed that the cases that came to be known by courts represent a much more common occurrence than their numbers suggest; successful *arreglos*, or unsuccessful ones where none of the parties sought to file charges, would have rarely if ever entered the courts. In contrast, other extralegal police interventions in disputes are somewhat more common in the court record, yet also must be taken as merely the tip of the iceberg. *Arreglos* and other such uses of power became increasingly common in court cases in the postrevolutionary decades; although the police certainly engaged in similar practices in earlier years, it is likely that their growing prominence in part reflected increasing recourse to such uses of police power.

The growing visibility of *arreglos* in court records speaks in part to changes in the formal criminal justice system, as courts became increasingly distrusted over time. Although a full accounting is beyond the scope of this project, it is clear that the criminal justice system changed in the postrevolutionary decades in ways that made people less likely to pursue justice through the courts.¹¹⁸ There were multiple reasons for this change. The end of the jury system made court decisions more opaque, and shortfalls in budgets and personnel severely impeded and slowed cases.¹¹⁹ Whether for these reasons, or because of frictions between the growing number of

¹¹⁸ In the most far-reaching work on the idea of criminal justice (as opposed to more institutionally-oriented works) in the twentieth century, Pablo Piccato has argued that courts became replaced by the public sphere as the preferred avenue to determine guilt and truth. Piccato, *A History of Infamy*. However, more work remains to be done; for example, Saydi Núñez Cetina has argued that post-revolutionary authorities' practices of regularly commuting the death penalty in homicide cases, replacing execution with prison sentences, built the state's legitimacy. Saydi Núñez Cetina, "¿Pena de muerte o indulto? La justicia penal y el perdón en el Distrito Federal durante la institucionalización del Estado revolucionario," *Revista Historia y Justicia* 2 (April 2014): 1–29.

¹¹⁹ Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, esp. Chap. 1; Speckman Guerra, *En tela de juicio*, esp. 163-172.

institutions that played a role in court proceedings, a large proportion of cases were held up for years if not completely dropped.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, reforms to better protect the rights of the accused in part decreased accusers' sense of surety of punishment. For example, pre-sentencing bail became more accessible: if, during the Porfiriato, getting bail was a cumbersome process that required arranging testimony from character witnesses, by the 1940s the process was significantly simplified, no longer requiring such testimony, and a number of companies offered services as guarantors.¹²¹ Given that, as discussed earlier, it was common for people to use arrest during investigation as a means of punishing those they blamed, easier access to bail lessened the

¹²⁰ A growing number of cases in the sample from the 1930s and especially the 1940s took years to resolve (if they were resolved), with much of that time spent in delays. In one lesiones case from 1947, for instance, the initial investigation proceeded fairly rapidly and was over within a couple of months, but the court appeared to forget about the case after the defense attorney failed to file a concluding statement. Even after judicial authorities dealt with that, the court ignored the case for years. It took until 1951 to issue a sentence. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3939, Exp. 691584: 1947, Lesiones. Similarly, the investigation in a case against gendarme Catarino Cruz Juárez that started in late 1946 largely concluded within three months of the accusation. However, after the file was sent to the Secretaría de Acuerdos de la Corte in January 1947, it took until September 1948 for it to be formally filed, and until March 1952 for the case to be decided. *Ibid.*, Caja 3817, Exp. 673831: 1946, Delito Oficial. For a third example: after two working-class women filed charges against two others for lesiones in April of 1944, the investigator issued summons for their purported attackers the following day. They do not appear to have responded to the summons, and the file was ignored until February of 1945. The case was registered by the courts without further action. *Ibid.*, Caja 3650, Exp. 652762: 1945, Lesiones. Although the degree of delay in these particular cases may have been exceptional, in general cases from the 1930s and 1940s took significantly longer to resolve than those from earlier periods, and a larger proportion of them appear to have been incomplete.

¹²¹ For example, to receive bail in a 1903 case, the comerciante Joaquín Escandón had to present two character witnesses, and it took several days after his arrest to receive it. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0251, Exp. 041900: 1903, Lesiones a un Agente de la Autoridad. In contrast, the comerciante Epifanio Carbajal López did not have to present character witnesses to receive bail in 1947, and appears to have received bail relatively easily from a guarantor company despite the high cost the judge imposed, after one night in jail. *Ibid.*, Caja 3962, Exp. 694939: 1947, Ataque Peligroso, Contra Agentes de la Autoridad, Resistencia de Particulares, Portación de Arma Prohibida.

The 1880 Código de Procedimientos Penales allowed bail only in cases punished by less than three months imprisonment, and only if suspects met a strict set of requirements: it had to be their first offense, and they had to have a “modo honesto de vivir,” “buenos antecedentes de moralidad,” and a fixed address (Art. 259). The 1894 Código de Procedimientos Penales allowed suspects bail if the crime was punishable by less than seven years imprisonment, but they still had to meet the same requirements (Art. 440). Article 20, fracción I of the 1917 Constitution stipulated that bail was to be available for all crimes whose median punishment was less than five years. The 1934 Código de Procedimientos Penales was rather looser than previous codes, allowing all suspects bail if the crime they were accused of had a minimum set punishment of less than five years imprisonment (and if the courts did not believe it unmerited based on the circumstances of the suspect and crime) (Art. 399). In cases of crimes punished by no more than two years in prison, suspects could be released without paying bail if they met a series of requirements (that it was their first offense, that they had a known address and a “modo honesto de vivir,” and that they were not judged to pose a flight risk) (Art. 418).

certainty and duration of this punishment. Finally, as has often been noted, amparo processes became increasingly common (and criticized in the public sphere); although they could be complicated to file, making them especially the province of the wealthy and well-connected, amparo processes by the accused could relatively easily bring criminal cases to a crashing halt.¹²² Overall, court processes appear to have become increasingly unpredictable for capitalinos, reducing the appeal of the court system as a means of resolving disputes. This is seen in part in official crime statistics, which recorded a serious decline from the late 1920s onward—a decline that criminologists of the era explained in part as a result of judicial inefficacy and generalized distrust of the criminal justice system.¹²³ As scholars have noted, this translated into tolerance for extralegal violence as a means of providing punishment, whether that meant the *ley fuga* by police (extrajudicial summary execution) or the lynching of suspected criminals.¹²⁴ This environment also allowed for the flourishing of police-organized *arreglos* as an alternative means of dealing with crime and disputes.

¹²² For example: after being charged with *lesiones* in 1943, the pulquería owner J. Encarnación Rivas Negrete was questioned but released by the Comisario of the 4a Delegación. Despite having been released, he then filed an amparo against the Procuraduría de Justicia, the Jefe de la Policía Judicial, and other officials against the execution of an arrest order against him. Although no such order seems to have been issued, and there was nothing out of the ordinary in the men’s accusation against him—similar cases having proceeded normally—the case was nonetheless halted by the amparo, apparently never to be reopened. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3530, Exp. 635631: 1943, *Lesiones*. Although amparos were only filed in a small minority of cases in the sample (whether in cases of interpersonal violence or crimes by or against police), they were much more common in the 1930s and 1940s than at other times—only two of the fifteen amparos in the sample came from cases prior to the 1930s.

Newspapers in the midcentury argued with some frequency that the amparo was too easily abused by criminals, and the 1942 National Police Congress sought to take advantage of this perception to propose rolling back constitutional protections to give police greater power (a plan which was nonetheless heavily criticized in the press). On the 1942 Congress, see: “La policía y la constitución,” *Novedades*, 1 May 1942; “Eficacia dentro de la legalidad,” *El Universal*, 1 May 1942. For other complaints about the amparo (among other matters), see: “El Congreso de Procuradores: un fracaso,” *La Prensa*, 13 May 1939; “Crece la criminalidad – la lucha armada,” *El Nacional*, 3 August 1950, 3.

¹²³ Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 217; Quiroz Cuarón, Gómez Robleda, and Argüelles Martínez, *Tendencia y ritmo de la criminalidad*, esp. 127-129; Quiroz Cuarón, *La criminalidad en la República Mexicana*. On declining crime rates, see: Pablo Piccato, “Estadísticas del crimen en México: Series Históricas, 1901-2001,” accessed August 20, 2020, <http://www.columbia.edu/~pp143/estadisticascrimen/EstadisticasSigloXX.htm>.

¹²⁴ Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, esp. 119-123; Kloppe-Santamaría, *In the Vortex of Violence*, 63–88.

Informal mediation was not solely the province of the police hierarchy, but also appears to have been frequent in the judicial system as well, especially at the lowest levels. Cases could follow multiple logics. In 1934, for instance, after a wealthy American tourist injured a driver in a fight at a restaurant, he was brought to the nearest Ministerio Público office. Rather than filing charges, as stipulated by the law, the prosecutorial agents arranged to free him in return for a series of fees: he paid fifty pesos to the injured driver, thirty for the interpretive services of an English-speaking agent, and two hundred as an extralegal fine (which was not registered, and presumably was simply divided among the agents).¹²⁵ In doing so, the arreglo provided the injured driver with a quick payment, kept the tourist from a long court proceeding, and lined the Ministerio Público agents' pockets. Yet arreglos were not only a tool of the wealthy, and at times they were done for more practical reasons. In a telling case from 1925, for example, a Juez de Paz fully admitted that he had authorized his Secretary to arrange informal arreglos between disputing parties as a replacement for formal proceedings. As he noted, informal mediation was the "only procedure that permits a solution to the controversies over trivial quantities [of money] that break out between the residents of the Demarcation," as the court would be completely overwhelmed if it had to do full proceedings for every minor dispute that capitalinos sought to address through the Juzgado de Paz.¹²⁶ The case also shows how the lack of legal backing for

¹²⁵ The incident entered the court records because one of the tourist's friends found it suspicious that he never received a receipt for his payments, and filed a complaint with the Policía Preventiva's tourism department. The Jefe de Policía took note of the case and commissioned an agent to investigate, stressing that tourism was vital to the national income and reputation. During his investigation, the agent briefly carried out a mass detention of Ministerio Público agents, who, furious, filed criminal charges against him and tried to get the local Comisario to arrest him. The case was inconclusive. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2750, Exp. 581096: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad, Ataques a las Garantías Individuales.

¹²⁶ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1966, Exp. 356840: 1925, Abuso de Autoridad. The Juez de Paz, who was a 22-year-old law student, noted that he had granted his secretary such powers "a efecto de abreviar las labores de su oficina." The arreglo, he said, was the "procedimiento único que permite la solución de controversias que por cantidades nimias se suscitan entre los vecinos de la Demarcación, ya que por tal razón es absolutamente imposible tomar cuadernos especiales [e.g., file a formal case] para resolver asuntos que merecen una sola audiencia, en la que siempre se procura avenir a las partes."

such arrangements meant that the court had to recur to other measures for enforcement. After the owner of an eatery had complained to the Governor about police who had run up a debt they refused to pay, the Governor had ordered the gendarmes' pay docked to cover the debt; one disgruntled gendarme had filed suit to recover his docked pay in the Juzgado de Paz, where the Secretary forced the vendor to return the money. Although the Secretary denied accusations that he had briefly detained the vendor, insulted her, and threatened to arrest her and send inspectors to fine her shop if she failed to return the money, even he admitted that he had "treated her with energy" and browbeat her as the only way to make her comply, seemingly a standard procedure.¹²⁷ But in comparison with low-level judicial personnel, the police could more readily draw upon violence as a resource in such cases, giving them an advantage over other officials in arranging arreglos.

Many police-backed arreglos stemmed from failed attempts at formal proceedings. In some cases, the impetus came from the police themselves, usually in response to the high barriers to entry to the formal justice system. Given their complexity, arreglos usually needed to be organized by higher police officials and their agents; foot gendarmes, who had relatively few resources and little mobility, played relatively little role. For example, in 1935 in Azcapotzalco, Genoveva Uribe Villegas sought to file charges in the Tribunal para Menores (juvenile court) after her son Pablo was struck in the face with a rock by one of his friends, Abel Ortiz Monroy. Officials in the Azcapotzalco police delegation balked at beginning formal proceedings—the injury was superficial, the required paperwork extensive, and the case so minor that the Tribunal

¹²⁷ Ibid. The Secretary, backed up by the gendarme, stated that he had "la trató con energía". Although the judge denied having witnessed this, he did say that it was rare for disputing parties to agree to any resolution. The vendor, Aurelia Solís, brought two of her employees as witnesses. The lower court found it credible that the Secretary had insulted Solís and indicted him. He appealed the indictment, but the file is incomplete and it is unclear how the case ended.

might have simply thrown it out—but they did attempt to bring Abel’s father in to meet with Uribe and work out an arreglo, seeking justice for Uribe through the reinforcement of patriarchal authority over the family (although the effort failed, as will be discussed).¹²⁸ Similarly, when Rodolfo Arenas Martínez, an employee at the Tacubaya train station, purportedly stole a coin purse and ring from the middle-class homemaker Sara Rosales Monter in 1934, she went to the local police delegation to file charges after station personnel failed to respond to her complaint. But Arenas refused to comply with a police summons and the local delegation allowed the case to languish, leading Rosales to complain to the central Jefatura de Policía, which sent two Servicio Secreto agents to investigate. The agents determined that Arenas had likely committed similar thefts with regularity, but they lacked concrete evidence. They therefore decided to arrange an arreglo: Arenas would pay a little over half the value of the ring, and Rosales would drop the charges. As they noted in a report to their superiors—highlighting the degree to which arreglos were an open secret within the police—an informal agreement was necessary because, without evidence, Arenas would undoubtedly be freed by the courts; moreover, formal charges against him threatened to embarrass the railroad company. An arreglo would enable them to reconcile the distinct interests involved in the case while reaching a modicum of justice for

¹²⁸ AGN, TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2792, Exp. 438982: 1935, Amenazas de Muerte, Abuso de Autoridad, Secuestro de Infante. Their appears to have been bad blood between the Uribe and Ortiz families (despite Pablo and Abel’s friendship), likely explaining why Uribe was so determined to go to court. Uribe described the elder Ortiz as “muy alzado,” although the exact reason why was unstated. There appears to have been something of a minor class divide, as well: Uribe was illiterate and appears to have been either single or in an informal amasiato (Pablo’s father is never mentioned), while Ortiz was formally married, literate, educated, and worked in a specialized job as a chemical worker at the Azcapotzalco oil refinery.

The police were not wrong to suspect that the case would be thrown out by the Tribunal para Menores. According to Susana Sosenski, in some 56% of cases there from 1927 to 1931 child suspects were freed. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of the children tried were orphans (with at least one parent deceased or not present), and the Tribunal was viewed as a means of replacing missing parental authority. Given that Abel’s parents were alive and well, it makes sense that the police would have preferred to attempt to reinforce patriarchal discipline rather than immediately consign him to the Tribunal. Sosenski, *Niños en acción*, 272, 275.

Rosales.¹²⁹ To those who agreed to arreglos, they appeared useful or necessary in the face of the well-known challenges to receiving justice through the formal judicial system. In showing this, court records provide a more detailed view of how informal police mediation could be legitimated than that provided by newspapers, which generally discussed such arreglos as simply the product of police immorality and corruption.¹³⁰

However, the newspapers were not totally wrong: for all that the term “arreglo” implied a sort of mutually-acceptable arrangement to resolve a dispute, arreglos were regularly extremely coercive, and there was often little difference between such cases and outright corruption or harassment. It may be suggested that this impression is a product of sampling: as such cases only entered the court record when police were accused of abuses, the sample misses instances where the arreglo worked without blatant violence. However, the cases in question highlight that arreglos worked through police violence, or at least its implicit threat in the background. Although the police in the Rosales-Arenas case took pains to suggest that the arreglo was agreed by all to be in their best interests, Arenas claimed that he had been forced into it by the police, who threatened to have him illegally held incommunicado for weeks if he refused. Moreover, they charged him ten pesos as payment for having arranged the arreglo.¹³¹ The extent of the coercive violence that underlay the arreglo was perhaps clearest in the case from Azcapotzalco. First, to try to force Abel Ortiz Monroy’s father to meet with Genoveva Uribe in the comisaría, police issued a series of summons, some of which threatened to arrest him if he failed to

¹²⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2775, Exp. 595820: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad. Although data is limited, Rosales appears to have belonged to the middle classes: she was literate, married, stated she had no profession (thus presenting herself as complying with norms of domesticity), and the ring was reportedly worth the not insubstantial sum of 100 pesos.

¹³⁰ See, for instance: Ignacio Morelos Zaragoza, “La purga en la policía,” *Excélsior*, 10 April 1940.

¹³¹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2775, Exp. 595820: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad.

comply—an illegal action, as such summons could only be issued with a judge’s approval. However, he still refused to show, claiming that the meeting would interfere with his work schedule. Despairing of arranging the *arreglo*, and with Uribe still demanding justice, police officials ultimately decided to send the station clerk to grab Abel on his way home from school, thus forcing his father to come to the station. However, the clerk botched the kidnapping attempt—Abel was wary of going with the threatening plainclothes official—and drew his pistol, chasing Abel (and several other terrified children with him) at gunpoint through the streets of Azcapotzalco. Eventually, Abel ran through a pottery yard and disappeared into a corn field, spending the next several hours hiding near the oil refinery. In the end, Abel’s father came to the *comisaría* not to speak with Uribe—who gave up on the *arreglo* and demanded that Abel be charged in the *Tribunal para Menores*—but to accuse the police of a series of abuses.¹³² As such incidents make clear, whatever legitimacy *arreglos* had was ultimately built on the practically untrammelled exercise of police violence, even in exceedingly minor cases.¹³³

If the cases discussed above entailed at least the pretense that the police were acting as neutral arbiters, in other cases the police used the same toolbox to directly resolve disputes through force on one party’s behalf as a means of sidestepping the formal justice system. In 1935, for instance, the nut vendor Agustín López Márquez evaded a civil court order to confiscate his goods to pay his creditors by transferring his small shop and merchandise to his wife (who he does not appear to have been formally married to). Although López’s maneuver

¹³² TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2792, Exp. 438982: 1935, Amenazas de Muerte, Abuso de Autoridad, Secuestro de Infante. The outcome of the case against Abel is not discussed in the file.

¹³³ Courts seem to have been largely unwilling to proceed against such offenses. In both cases discussed, the courts failed to carry out a full investigation. The station clerk who drew a gun on Abel Ortiz Monroy in Azcapotzalco was apparently fired, the rest of the police officials blaming him for exceeding his orders, but the other police authorities do not appear to have suffered any consequences for their role, even though they admitted to having sent illegal summons. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2792, Exp. 438982: 1935, Amenazas de Muerte, Abuso de Autoridad, Secuestro de Infante.

likely would not have withstood a serious legal process, the other merchants who had filed the civil suit against him appear to have become frustrated, and went to the Policía Judicial. López claimed that the police agent illegally detained him, and that in the Policía Judicial headquarters, he was forced under threat of being sent to the Islas Mariás penal colony to agree to sign a document from his creditors' lawyer recognizing his debts; moreover, he said, the police stole 100 pesos from him, and his creditors' lawyer demanded an additional 100 pesos for his role in the arreglo.¹³⁴ Similarly, in 1942, Servicio Secreto agents detained Ramón Flores Padilla, the owner of an industrial dairy production plant, taking him from his home in Colonia Cuauhtémoc and holding him for several hours exposed on the Jefatura rooftop on a cold winter evening and night. Threatened with the possibility of worse treatment, he was forced by police to sign a document desisting in his claims in a legal battle he was fighting against a well-connected military general's family over a plot of land in Acapulco.¹³⁵ Such cases, as well as others, suggest that members of the upper classes—like Flores— and the middle classes—like Márquez, who despite claiming to be illiterate (which was disputed) did well enough to own his own shop and to hire a lawyer—were not immune to police mistreatment and violence, especially related to business (or, in other cases, political) disputes.¹³⁶ However, it is also likely that such instances

¹³⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2845, Exp. 463422: Abuso de Autoridad, Amenazas, Privación Ilegal de Libertad, Usurpación de Funciones Públicas, Fraude. The case will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

¹³⁵ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3536, Exp. 630477: 1943, Abuso de Autoridad, Ataques a las Garantías Individuales.

¹³⁶ For another example, in 1932 Leopoldo Támez y Pérez (who described himself as an industrialist [*industrial*]) was illegally arrested with his brother by Comisiones de Seguridad agents. They threatened to send Támez to Pánuco, Veracruz, where the local congressional deputy reportedly wanted to kill Támez in retaliation for the death of the deputy's brother. Instead, after holding Támez incommunicado for several days, they took him to his home, to his printing press offices, and to one of his employee's homes, stealing a total of 16,000 pesos from him as well as his car. They also kept him in the Jefatura for several more days, hiding him in a broken-down elevator when Támez's employees and friends came in search of him to put into effect an amparo on his behalf, before finally freeing him, although they continued to harass him later. Támez was prominent enough that a congressman intervened on his behalf; however, despite the President ordering an investigation, the police agents and officials involved do not appear from the case file to have ever been arrested. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2632, Exp. 546887: 1933, Abuso de Autoridad, Privación Ilegal de la Libertad.

are over-represented in court records, as better-off victims of abuses had more resources available to file charges against the police.

In a number of cases, the police were accused of committing blatant abuses on behalf of landlords involved in disputes with working-class tenants, often stemming from purported personal ties between police (and other officials) and the landlord. As noted earlier, this was nothing new. However, these cases appear to have become more frequent in the postrevolutionary decades, as landlords appeared to have forged greater ties with higher-ranking members of the police hierarchy and the criminal justice system.¹³⁷ For instance, in 1941, Isabel García Cuellar alleged that her landlord, Miguel Orrico Caparroso, had refused to give her receipts for her rent payments; when she complained, he showed up one night with a gendarme, violently dragged her out of her home in an apartment building in Colonia Roma, and brought her to the Eighth Delegación, where she was made to pay a fine of fifteen pesos.¹³⁸ Her claims were supported by other tenants, who said that Orrico not only frequently refused to give receipts (so that he could double-charge his tenants), but also that it was well known that he “has a friend or *compadre* in the Delegación” who he used to harass tenants.¹³⁹ Indeed, Orrico clearly counted on the favor of the police and judicial officials. García had filed her complaint in the same Eighth Delegación at the center of the dispute, and officials never attempted to question the landlord despite the

Pablo Piccato has noted the nexus of politics, business, and violence (the latter carried out by *pistoleros* who in some cases were also police): Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, chap. 5.

¹³⁷ As historians of housing have noted, complaints about exploitative landlords were a constant refrain in the postrevolutionary era, fueling tenant activism and generating sporadic reform efforts. See: *A City on a Lake*, 83–93, 177–82.

¹³⁸ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3418, Exp. 620357: 1942, Allanamiento de Morada, Abuso de Autoridad. Despite Colonia Roma’s reputation as a middle- or professional-class neighborhood, the tenants in this case were all from the working classes. While García did not give an occupation, her status is hinted at by her illiteracy, and her neighbors who testified were a cabinetmaker and a painter (apparently of houses and signs, not of art).

¹³⁹ Ibid. As Carlos Mendoza Cortés stated, “que según ha sabido él que habla, dicho señor [e.g., Orrico] tiene un amigo o *compadre* en la Delegación, quien le extiende los citatorios y multa a las personas que indica el mencionado Miguel Orrico Caparroso”.

charges against him. Orrico did, however, send in a letter accusing García of calumny; along with it, he provided proof that the Delegación's Juez de Paz had repeatedly fined Orrico's tenants for vague *faltas* (violations or offenses) against him—apparently intended as evidence of his tenants' unruliness, but clearly showing that authorities regularly backed him up in his disputes with them. Moreover, while the gendarme in question denied having committed any violence, he did note that he had already finished his shift, but had nonetheless been ordered by the police Commandant to go with Orrico to make the arrest.¹⁴⁰

In other cases, landlords went to the police or Ministerio Público to harass working-class tenants due to tenants' efforts to use other institutions on their behalf in disputes. The portera Juana Figueroa, for instance, was illegally arrested by Ministerio Público and police agents (again from the Eighth Delegación) during a dispute with her landlord and employer, the former congressman and writer Luis Mora Tovar, after she blocked the latter's attempt to fire her by filing a wrongful dismissal suit in the Junta Central de Conciliación y Arbitraje del Distrito Federal. Although the Policía Judicial investigation appeared to confirm much of her complaint, the court never proceeded with the case.¹⁴¹ Similarly, the sisters Ana María and Martha Zárate Rodríguez, who owned a building on Salto del Agua street in the southwest of the city center, believed that an extended family of tenants had the favor of the local police Delegación, as one

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Orrico's letter included copies from the Juez de Paz showing two tenants (including García) were fined for "faltas" on 27-28 November 1941, and that a third (possibly García's husband) was fined on 1 December 1941 for failure to pay the rent.

¹⁴¹ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3476, Exp. 630764: 1943, Denuncia Hechos.

Juntas Centrales de Conciliación y Arbitraje (there was one in each state and in the Federal District) were the main institution tasked with mediating labor conflicts, as well as carrying out a number of other functions, from the late 1920s onward. As Kevin J. Middlebrook has argued, they were crucial in the postrevolutionary state's control over labor. Notably, only a minority of the cases before them (even during the Cárdenas administration) were resolved through conciliation or arbitration, with just over half resulting in private settlements. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution*, 58–62, 186–90, and *passim*. Despite this, a number of instances of police harassment were reportedly carried out on employers' behalf due to filings before the Junta Central.

of the sisters and her cousin were briefly arrested on a tenant's complaint during a dispute over rent; another member the family, who worked as the building's portera, had also filed against them in the Junta Central de Conciliación y Arbitraje. As a result, the Zárates went to the Servicio Secreto, which illegally raided the building, carried out a mass arrest of the tenant family, and detained many of them for three days. Although the family filed charges for abuses, the court took no action to continue the investigation.¹⁴² The case further suggests how accusations of police favoritism became common currency in disputes: as the police were notorious for acting according to personalist logics, arrests were taken as a sign that one's opponents had their favor, and could be challenged on such grounds.¹⁴³

However, if cases such as the ones above suggest a growing role in the 1930s and 1940s for Comisariás and police officials in arranging arreglos or instances of harassment, other cases show that lower-ranking gendarmes could act in a similar way as well. In one typical case from 1936, for instance, the milk distributor Manuel Peralta Martínez complained of harassment from the military officer (and, apparently, lawyer) Alberto Díaz Ponce. Backed by a gendarme, Díaz had insulted and struck Peralta, threatened to arrest him, and moreover stole his milk deliveries. Díaz represented a family that Peralta had filed a complaint against over debts in the Junta Central de Conciliación y Arbitraje, and Peralta had no doubt that the harassment was intended to get him to drop the case.¹⁴⁴ If such incidents were blatantly illegal, other cases highlight how

¹⁴² TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3536, Exp. 630479: 1943, Denuncia Hechos. Of the members of the tenant family who listed occupations other than "las labores del hogar," one was a blacksmith, one a *machetero*, and one a portera who also ran a food stall in front of the building.

¹⁴³ Similarly, after two medical students and a law student were arrested for refusing to pay the bill in a nightclub and fighting with the police, one of them claimed that the real reason for their arrest was that the club employees must have had influence with the police. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3944, Exp. 692251: 1947, Fraude, Lesiones, Contra Agentes de la Autoridad.

¹⁴⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2859, Exp. 465407: 1936, Injurias, Amenazas, Golpes. Notably, prosecutors acted relatively quickly in the case, but within four days of filing the complaint, Peralta could not be found and the case stalled.

police could use legal charges for harassment. After a dispute on Christmas Eve of 1934 between a taxi driver and Wilebaldo Cañas Castro, a pulquería owner who reportedly refused to pay his fare, the driver went to a nearby group of gendarmes for assistance. They confronted Cañas in his pulquería. They claimed that Cañas insulted them and pretended to be a congressional deputy (as deputies counted on legal impunity). Cañas, for his part, admitted that he showed his Partido Nacional Revolucionario identification card, hoping that his membership in the party would convince the police to not mistreat him. His ploy failed: although Cañas finally paid the taxi driver, the police nonetheless charged him with insults, crimes against the police, and usurpation of public functions, and he was held in a cell for the night before being freed on bail; judicial personnel dropped the charges against him for lack of evidence shortly afterward.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, even in cases without allegations of direct corruption, it is clear that the wide range of public order offenses that could be applied, especially against lower- and working-class capitalinos, still made the police a useful tool of harassment. In June of 1942 in Colonia Obrera, gendarme Antonio Castillo Serrano arrested the laundress Guadalupe García de Ornelas at the request of her husband, the electrician Lauro Ornelas Barajas, for walking in the company of another man.¹⁴⁶ Although García and Ornelas were legally married, they had been separated for two years; however, Ornelas wanted a legal divorce and, apparently, custody of their child. To coerce García into the divorce, Ornelas purportedly sent a male friend of his to bother García while she was walking home from work, then told Castillo, who was on duty nearby, that they had committed adultery. The 1931 Penal Code only punished adultery if it was committed in the

¹⁴⁵ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2775, Exp. 595657: 1934, Delitos contra Agentes de Autoridad, Injurias, Usurpación de Funciones Públicas.

¹⁴⁶ The following discussion is based on: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3398, Exp. 626999: 1942, Denuncia de Hechos.

conjugal home or “with scandal,” but Castillo nonetheless arrested them.¹⁴⁷ In the Fourth Delegación offices, while Ornelas’s friend was quickly released, García was subjected to an invasive medical exam to check for signs of recent sexual activity; worse, the station doctor carried out the exam without using gloves (he later claimed there was a lack of supplies and, in any case, they were unnecessary) and with the gendarme present in the room. While the doctor found no signs of adultery, he claimed on ambiguous evidence that she had a venereal disease (although a later medical exam proved that García was in fact healthy). Postrevolutionary authorities had, for decades, sought to control such illnesses as threats to the nation, and authorities had recently begun new campaigns against venereal disease in the wake of the 1940 deregulation of prostitution.¹⁴⁸ Although she had not committed a crime, García was fined twenty-five pesos for “faltas graves” (grave offenses), which she could not pay at the time, and so she was detained overnight and sent to the city jail the next day. On 6 June, Ornelas paid her fine and immediately took her to his lawyer’s office, where he forced her to sign divorce papers and gave her a drink that made her faint. García further claimed that Ornelas later appeared at her home, accompanied by men he identified as Policía Judicial agents, with a false order to take away their son, although he failed in his attempt. Despite García’s plea for justice, and the

¹⁴⁷ *Código Penal para el Distrito y Territorios Federales en materia de fuero común, y para toda la república en materia de fuero federal [1931]* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación; Tolsa y Enrico Martínez, 1931), Art. 273.

¹⁴⁸ On postrevolutionary concerns over sexually transmitted illnesses, see: Bliss, *Compromised Positions*, 98–105; Katherine Elaine Bliss, “For the Health of the Nation: Gender and the Cultural Politics of Social Hygiene in Revolutionary Mexico,” in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, ed. Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 196–218.

Article 528 of the 1929 Penal Code sentenced those who unwittingly carried a sexually transmitted infection to pay a fine equivalent to five to twenty days’ wages. *Código Penal para el Distrito y Territorios Federales [1929]* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1929). In contrast, the 1931 Penal Code did not originally include such provisions. *Código Penal de 1931*. However, in 1940 the Penal Code was modified to punish knowing transmission of sexually transmitted illnesses; the same year, authorities issued new regulations for a new campaign against venereal disease. Santillán Esqueda, *Delincuencia femenina*, 99. See also: “Reglamento para la campaña contra las enfermedades venéreas,” *Diario Oficial*, 8 February 1940, 10-11.

Ministerio Público's preliminary investigation confirming the details of her story, the court took no action on the case. Her ordeal highlights how working-class women were particularly vulnerable to police harassment as a tool in disputes with male partners (including former ones).

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Taken together, the cases above suggest how extralegal police power was seen as a useful tool to intervene in or resolve disputes. They also showcase how multiple logics coincided to create such instances of police violence. For the police—whether the high-ranking officials that organized more complex arreglos or harassment campaigns, or the foot gendarmes who operated on a smaller scale—they provided a chance for illicit gain, whether from the extortion of victims or from the bribes that likely greased the wheels of police favor. At the same time, arreglos also offered the possibility of bringing cases to a somewhat satisfactory end for victims. The formal judicial system was seen as an unwieldy tool for resolving disputes, making extralegal police action an attractive option for people involved in disputes of all kinds; this was further propped up by police impunity. It is clear that the extralegal force behind the intervention of Comisaría-level police officials and their subordinates was more available to the upper- and middle-classes, who had more resources to gain police favor, but was not entirely limited to them, and ordinary foot gendarmes were more accessible to members of the working and lower classes.

Conclusion

As discussed in the previous chapter, observers often blamed police abuses on poor discipline. This chapter has shown that the reality was more complex: the policing of Mexico City was not a top-down process, neither for social control nor on behalf of police corruption, but

rather, quotidian uses of police power emerged out of city residents' efforts to shape policing to fit their own needs and purposes. In doing so, this chapter has made three basic points.

First, despite frequently repeated claims of popular disdain for the police, residents nonetheless recognized them as a useful instrument; even in public order offenses, police regularly made arrests on the basis of residents' requests. In selective, strategic ways, capitalinos sought to employ police power—whether in a coercive or protective sense—as a resource in their local conflicts, injecting public authority into spaces and relations that police otherwise would have found it hard to intervene in. As part of this process, they also often sought to contain abuses and, at times, to limit police intervention in ostensibly private realms. As a result, the role of the police in ordering the city was a negotiated process, albeit one that took place on profoundly uneven terms that privileged members of the respectable classes and the police themselves.

Second, discretion and extralegal uses of force were at the heart of policing. Police—stretched across a teeming city and holding extensive authority to make arrests for a wide range of quotidian activities—could hardly uphold the law evenly and for all, hence the negotiation of police power entailed the question of who would be subject to policing and who would be (at least temporarily) exempt. By the same token, the ease with which people could be found to be in violation of some law or regulation allowed police authority to be extended into all manner of situations. When combined with impunity, the result was that, for capitalinos, police power was an attractive tool for intervening in conflicts, whether that meant harassing a rival or arranging an informal *arreglo* to resolve a dispute (whether through genuine mediation or the simple use of coercion). These uses of police power became increasingly prominent in the 1930s and 1940s,

shaped in part by judicial reforms that made the courts less and less useful to city residents as a means of predictably resolving disputes.

Finally, this chapter has suggested that interpersonal ties with the police were often—though not invariably—a useful means of gaining protection or of calling upon favorable access to coercive power. However, if such relations were important for ordinary capitalinos, they were far more critical for those whose lives and livelihoods were most directly exposed to regular police scrutiny, like street vendors and alcohol sellers. The following chapter therefore delves into police relations with vendors, tracing changing patterns of corruption and protection as mediated by their close contact.

Chapter 4.
“Between the Sword and the Wall”:
Police, Comerciantes, and the Extralegal Ordering of the City

On 29 August 1936, José María Ortiz Páramo, a tax collector with the Federal District’s Oficina de Mercados, was brought into police custody after a dispute with a pozole and pancita vendor on a street corner near the sprawling Mercado de la Merced, the most important market in the capital. Ortiz complained that the vendor habitually refused to pay her taxes, and that when he had tried to collect them that afternoon, she simply insulted him. But when he went to a gendarme stationed nearby for help, the police instead took the vendor’s side and arrested Ortiz. In the station, police subjected him to an array of humiliations: tearing his Oficina de Mercados identification card to pieces, stealing the market fees he had collected earlier that day, mocking him, illegally detaining him overnight, and charging him with trumped-up crimes against the police. Ortiz was freed in the following days when the courts evidently found the accusations against him unfounded, and he almost immediately brought charges against the police for abuse of authority and theft, but the case dragged on for months and proved inconclusive.¹

Ortiz’s case raises questions. Why had the police sided with a purportedly tax-evading street vendor over a city tax collector? The simple answer would be that the gendarme saw Ortiz mistreat the vendor, as was claimed during the initial arrest. While Ortiz may well have done so, it is likely that there were other reasons, as well. All too many case records are incomplete, but Ortiz’s is exceptionally so. Many affidavits are only referenced in passing rather than being recorded in the file, and many witnesses, including the vendor and the gendarme who made the arrest, were never questioned. If exactly what happened between Ortiz and the unnamed vendor

¹ AGN, TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2976, Exp. 499459: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Robo.

can only be guessed at, other cases, as well as petitions, administrative files, and newspapers, suggest a rich array of possibilities. Ortiz's case, and others like it, sheds light on the relations that developed between police and small-scale vendors in the capital and which went beyond simple repression. Relationships that ranged from collusion to coercion, and that were marked by extralegal uses of police authority as a central, constructive element, were generated by the working conditions of gendarmes and vendors alike, and flourished in an environment where often-contradictory regulations could not be fully applied without shutting down much of the city's petty commerce, disrupting the livelihoods of a vast number of capitalinos and risking serious disorder. Regulatory enforcement and vendors' livelihoods were strongly shaped by the relationships they formed with police, in turn shaping the uses and practices of police power.

The conditions of police work and petty commerce alike generated certain patterns of relationships between police and *comerciantes*—literally, “merchants,” but a broad term encompassing a wide range from street vendors to major business owners.² From the Porfiriato onward, building off of earlier reforms dating back to the late colonial era, petty commerce and the sale of certain goods like alcohol were particularly targeted by increasingly restrictive regulations based on ideologies of social sanitation and modernization. Legislation produced precarity in the lives of vendors, leaving them open to fines, arrest, and the confiscation of goods. But authorities often proved unable or unwilling to uphold such laws consistently, partly due to legal contradictions, partly because of simple state incapacity, and partly because full enforcement would have disrupted established channels of commerce and subsistence that allowed the city to keep going. As a result, vendors found precarious footholds in the spaces left

² To limit repetition, I have used “vendor” and “comerciante” interchangeably in this chapter, and specify what they sold when distinctions are necessary.

open by the regulatory regime. Vendors often relied on the interpersonal relationships they formed with the police to negotiate tolerance for their activities. Good relations with the police were crucial not only for their commerce, but also served the interests of both gendarmes and vendors. Yet these relationships hinged on informal police powers of discretion. While there were many routes to police favor, which was necessary for not only tolerance but also as a resource in conflicts between vendors, developments in the 1930s increasingly placed extortion and violence at the center of police-vendor relations, subtly changing the terms by which police and vendors alike negotiated regulatory enforcement. Violence was a crucial resource for mediating police-vendor relations, at times in the service of certain vendors against rivals but more often on the part of the police. Ultimately, vendors' precarious place in the city was purchased at the cost of police corruption and violence.

As scholars have shown, Mexico City's vendors were not mere victims of authorities' efforts to regulate public space, but themselves were skilled at forging political alliances, engaging collectively with the public sphere, and making recourse to institutions like the city council or the judiciary to defend their interests.³ Yet much (though not all) of this literature

³ Early works emphasized state repression and vendors' resistance. For two examples dealing with the colonial era, see: Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos? Diversiones públicas y vida social en la ciudad de México durante el Siglo de las Luces* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987); Pamela Voekel, "Peeing on the Palace: Bodily Resistance to Bourbon Reforms in Mexico City," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5, no. 2 (June 1992): 183–208. For a more recent example about Puebla that also centers top-down state repression, see Sandra C. Mendiola García, *Street Democracy: Vendors, Violence, and Public Space in Late Twentieth-Century Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

Other scholars have emphasized vendors' agency as expressed through their often-successful negotiations with authorities. Susie S. Porter, "'And That It Is Custom Makes It Law': Class Conflict and Gender Ideology in the Public Sphere, Mexico City, 1880-1910," *Social Science History* 24, no. 1, Special Issue: The Working Classes and Urban Public Space (Spring 2000): 111–48; John C. Cross, *Informal Politics: Street Vendors and the State in Mexico City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Andrew Konove, *Black Market Capital: Urban Politics and the Shadow Economy in Mexico City* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018); Mario Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles: subsistencia y negociación política en la ciudad de México a comienzos del siglo XX* (México: El Colegio de México, 2008); Christina M. Jiménez, "From the Lettered City to the Sellers' City: Vendor Politics and Public Space in Urban Mexico, 1880-1926," in *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*, ed. Gyan Prakash and Kevin M. Kruse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008),

focuses on responses to relatively large-scale developments, such as the implementation of new regulations, or the opening, closing, and moving of markets. It also often privileges comerciantes' relations, often mediated through petitions and vendors' organizations, with major institutions such as the Ayuntamiento or the DDF's Oficina de Mercados, rather than on the day-to-day regulation of vending by diverse authorities.⁴ In contrast, other scholars have emphasized more quotidian relations between vendors and the street-level authorities charged with day-to-day regulatory enforcement. Their analyses have emphasized the degree to which police were inserted into networks of exchange and shared cultural norms with those they policed, and have highlighted the utility of corruption and discretion to police and vendor alike. However, such framings have at times painted a static (or only slow-changing) portrait of such negotiations, and elsewhere struggled to capture the role of violence, sometimes implying an even playing field between police and policed and downplaying how police power structured their relationships with those around them.⁵ At the same time, analyses that emphasize police corruption from an institutional perspective might highlight violence, and have fruitfully argued for the centrality of extralegal normativity and discretion in police practices, but can give relatively short shrift to the

214–46; Rodrigo Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas: el derecho, el ambulante y las calles en el centro de la Ciudad de México (1930-2010)* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas; Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, 2011); Ingrid Bleynat, "The Business of Governing: Corruption and Informal Politics in Mexico City's Markets, 1946-1958," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 50, no. 2 (May 2018): 355–81; Christina M. Jiménez, *Making an Urban Public: Popular Claims to the City in Mexico, 1879-1932* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019); Ingrid Bleynat, *Vendor's Capitalism: A Political Economy of Public Markets in Mexico City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021).

⁴ See many of the works cited in the previous footnote. Mario Barbosa Cruz's work places more emphasis on low-level discretion and corruption as mediating regulation. Yet his emphasis is how street vendors gradually consolidated into a united interest group that found a foothold in the postrevolutionary corporate order.

⁵ While Barbosa Cruz has described negotiations as characterized by "mutual convenience," Diego Pulido Esteva (in an admittedly relatively early work) described them as "part of a game in which each member seeks to benefit." Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, 245; Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, 94. While Barbosa argues that police tolerance for street vending stemmed from ties driven by police's shared social background and cultural norms with those they policed, Pulido contends that police tolerance for violations of regulations on drinking was likely more driven by personal financial gain.

question of what vendors got out of their relations with police—or what police got out of their relations with vendors beyond illicit financial gain.⁶ As this chapter shows, relations between vendors and police were multifarious. Historians need not recur to older portrayals of a monolithically repressive state confronted with continual popular resistance to give attention to the inequalities and violence inherent in vendor’s relations with the police, or to trace how they developed over time.⁷

This chapter examines a range of sources, but especially court records, to examine how day-to-day negotiations between vendors and police shaped the ordering of the city. In using court records focused on police abuse of authority, and capitalinos’ conflicts with the police, it views the relationship between vendors and authorities from a different vantage than more frequently-used petitions and license requests.⁸ It argues that the quotidian relations that developed between vendors and the police effectively generated their own form of extralegal order, necessitated by the impossibility of full regulatory enforcement, setting the practical terms of vendors’ continuing but fragile inclusion into the modernizing city, but also that this

⁶ Diego Pulido Esteva, “Los negocios de la policía en la ciudad de México durante la posrevolución,” *Trashumante: Revista Americana de Historia Social*, no. 6 (2015): 8–31; Diego Pulido Esteva, “Trabajo, clase y prácticas policiales en las comisarías de la ciudad de México, 1870-1920,” *Historia Mexicana* 68, no. 2 (270) (October 2018): 667–712.

⁷ Amy Chazkel, in her analysis of the *jogo do bicho* in Brazil, argues for moving away from the rigid binaries of domination and resistance, to instead focus on the interplay between coercion and consent. Chazkel, *Laws of Chance*, esp. 264-265.

⁸ Much of the literature on vendor’s negotiations with authority focuses especially heavily on petitions; see, for instance: Konove, *Black Market Capital*; Porter, ““And That It Is Custom Makes It Law””; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*; Bleyntat, “The Business of Governing”. The criminal court cases used here are also different than the amparo suits analyzed in: Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas*, Chap. 3.

Petitions and license requests carry with them certain limitations as sources, privileging strategic rhetorical appeals and lending themselves, by virtue of the officials they are directed toward, to certain views of how comerciantes negotiated with political power. In contrast, court records provide a more multivocal perspective on day-to-day relations and practices.

On reading court records, see: Brodwyn Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001); Chazkel, *Laws of Chance*, 95.

extralegal order's dependence on sustained interpersonal ties left it vulnerable to interference from other authorities. In doing so, this chapter forces a reconsideration of the role of police corruption and informal power in the construction of urban public order, emphasizing such practices' rootedness in the social relations engendered by policing and challenging common understandings of police corruption as the parasitic result of poor discipline and uneven professionalization (as discussed in Chapter Two).⁹ Moreover, it shows that these relations shifted dramatically in the 1930s. If they had previously been characterized by arrangements made largely on an individual scale and dependent on a wide range of practices—including violence and extortion alongside the simple trade of favors and favoritism—changes in regulations, policing, and the greater socio-economic context in the 1920s and 1930s moved these relations in a more violent, more extortionary, and more organized direction. Finally, this chapter traces vendor-police relations beyond regulatory enforcement to shed light on other aspects of their relationship, especially varied uses of police power and extralegal force. The very same aspects of police power that made it such a potent tool for vendors also made them more vulnerable to police abuses.

Vendors: A Social Profile

Mexico City was by far the largest market for goods, foods, and services in the country. Whether in its teeming markets, its established shops, or its street vending, commerce was the

⁹ These conditions, so discussed by contemporaries, undoubtedly facilitated widespread corruption. But emphasizing them misses how and why corruption and extralegal uses of police power became so prevalent and entrenched in the first place, and how they contributed to the making of an urban order distinct from that imagined by legislation. On corruption and the informal use of power as a constructive aspect of urban order vis-à-vis vendors' relations with authorities (albeit the DDF Market Office rather than police), see: Bleyntat, "The Business of Governing."

lifeblood of the city, vital for survival in the context of widespread poverty and material scarcity.¹⁰ The exact number of people employed in commerce is difficult to determine; as historians have noted, much of the commercial activity that was so crucial to urban living for so many, including street vending, was rendered partially invisible in official statistics.¹¹ Census records from 1895 to 1950 (see Table 4.1) show that comerciantes consistently made up anywhere from 4.7% to 7.6% of the Federal District population, but categories were inconsistent across censuses, small-scale or sporadic vendors were undoubtedly undercounted, and the censuses themselves failed to classify a large proportion of the adult population (over 600,000 by the 1940 census), many of whom likely engaged in vending at least sporadically. Moreover, censuses undercounted women's participation in vending—while censuses show a consistent gender division of about 75% male and 25% female across all decades, other sources show that a much higher proportion of small-scale and food vendors were women.¹² Despite such limitations, censuses do show that much of the world of commerce took place on a decidedly small scale. Even as late as in the 1940 and 1950 censuses, some 55% of those working in commerce were

¹⁰ Bleyntat, *Vendor's Capitalism*; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, 80–105; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 30–32.

¹¹ Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, 109–16; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 31.

¹² Susie Porter finds that 70% of street vendor petitions in her sample of hundreds from the late Porfiriato were written by women. In contrast, by the 1990s, John C. Cross found that around 55% of vendors were men. Porter, ““And That It Is Custom Makes It Law,”” 134; Cross, *Informal Politics*, 89.

Notably, only 25.70% of the vendors included the sample of court records (1878-1947) as witnesses, suspects, and victims were women, yet this is undoubtedly an undercount. For most of the sample period, courts only systematically collected occupational information from men, and usually did not ask women. While some women did explicitly identify their occupation, in most cases their work has to be gleaned from their narratives, which is only possible for a portion of women questioned. In contrast, women were systematically asked about their occupation by the 1940s, but the increasing spread of ideals of women's domesticity meant that the overwhelming majority gave their occupation as housework (“las labores de su hogar”) even in cases where their narratives made it clear they worked as comerciantes or in other jobs. As a result, whether in the Porfiriato or in the post-revolutionary era, court records systematically undercounted women's labor. On ideals of women's domestic role, and conflicts around it, see: French, “Prostitutes and Guardian Angels”; Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City*; Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining La Chica Moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917-1936* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

listed as “individuals that work alone” or as people who “work for their own account,” that is, as the owners of their own small-scale operations, whether that meant a small shop, a stall, or simple street vending.¹³

Year	1895	1900	1910	1921	1930	1940	1950
Comerciantes*	26,518	33,427	41,864	51,744	58,282	133,630	187,294
Percentage of total DF population	5.6%	6.2%	5.8%	5.7%	4.7%	7.6%	6.1%

Table 4.1: Number of Comerciantes, 1895-1950.

SOURCE: Compiled from national census figures.

*Categories varied significantly from census to census. The 1895 and 1900 figures here combine those given for Comerciantes, Dependientes, and Vendedores Ambulantes (with the former by far the most numerous), ignoring both the small numbers of bankers and agents as well as the somewhat larger number of property owners and landlords who were lumped together in the broader Comercio category in 1895 (but not in 1900). The 1910 figure is just for Comerciantes, as Dependientes and Vendedores Ambulantes were no longer counted separately. The 1921 and 1950 figures are simply for Comercio overall and include small numbers of bankers, insurance agents, and the like who were excluded by figures from other years. The 1930 and 1940 figures are those for “Comercio en general” and do not include bankers, insurance agents, or those working in hotels or restaurants (who had their own categories).

Court records present a different view of the world of petty commerce. In statements, lower- and working-class *capitalinos* discussed their economic circumstances and activities, highlighting the role of vending in popular survival strategies. Life in the capital from the late nineteenth century onward was marked by low wages and a high cost of living.¹⁴ For many capitalinos, sporadic or regular vending provided a means of supplementing chronic low incomes and intermittent work, making the city survivable despite the instability and insufficiency of the urban labor market. One day in late 1880, for instance, the brothers Basilio and Jesús González, and their cousins Marcos and Agustín Arteaga, first visited a home where they had heard work

¹³ The 1940 census stated that 73,439 in total (55% of the overall figure for “Comercio en general”) were “individuos que trabajan solos, propietarios de establecimientos, no directores y otros,” a category that contrasted with owners, employees, wage-earners, and unpaid workers in family businesses. Similarly, the 1950 census stated that 102,206 (55.1% of the overall figure for “Comercio”) were people who “trabajan por su cuenta”.

¹⁴ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, chap. 2; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, chap. 1.

(likely domestic labor of some sort) was available. After only one of them was hired, the other three sold lace-making materials from the corner of Plateros and Palma streets, just west of the Zócalo in one of the busiest parts of the capital, before spending the afternoon making bridles for a long-distance stagecoach company.¹⁵ The same year, the house painter Timoteo Reyes explained to a court that his landlord, who shared space in the tortillería where she lived (and presumably worked) with Reyes and his wife, had asked him to go to the nearby Baratillo Market to sell some small pans, which he did “in order to bring his family some money with which they could pass the day.”¹⁶ Although such vending may have been supplemental, it was vital to the precarious lives of the urban lower and working classes.¹⁷

Others, who likely counted on rather more capital, turned to street vending on a more permanent basis. In 1879, for instance, Agustín Rocha described himself as a carpenter, but seems to have done little carpentry. Every night he walked from his home on the north side of the city near the Plaza de Santa Catarina to the Zócalo. There, in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral and near a puppet show stall, he set up a small stand from which he sold coffee, pambazos, and (probably) alcohol to nighttime revelers and passersby.¹⁸ As with many artisans,

¹⁵ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1880, Basilio Gonzalez, Heridas. All four men were migrants to the capital, as were many vendors, although this was hardly out of place with general demographic trends. The overall proportion of vendors born in the Federal District in the court record sample is broadly similar to the migration patterns of the wider population.

¹⁶ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1880, Matías Rojas o Puga and Cristobal Romero, Heridas and Infracción de obligación. Reyes, who was attacked by a former coworker in the market, claimed he told his assailant he was there to “vender sus efectos con el fin de llevarle a su familia algo de dinero con que pudiera pasar el día”.

¹⁷ For a further example, in 1881 the Veracruz migrant José María Arroyo divided his time between undoubtedly low-paying work in the city streets as a *cargador*, and running a stall selling books (despite being illiterate) in the Plaza del Seminario. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 707: 1881, José Mareia Arroyo and Tomás Estrada, Lesiones.

¹⁸ TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1879, Fransisco Vázquez, Homicidio de Dimas Galicia. It is likely that Rocha sold alcohol, as several witnesses mentioned having gone there as part of a string of visits that night to different drinking establishments across the city center—although they may have simply stopped there for a coffee and food between drinks.

Rocha would have faced generally declining status and at best stagnant income through his previous occupation.¹⁹ Selling food and drink, especially from a relatively cheap temporary stand, would have provided a low-cost and perhaps more stable means of making a living. Other vendors moved readily between products, following supply and market demand.²⁰

Alcohol vending was a particularly common and lucrative activity. Pulque, especially, was immensely popular during the Porfiriato and afterward, despite elite disapproval, and the market was strong enough to sustain a large number of vendors.²¹ Many *pulqueros* (pulque vendors) listed other occupations in court, likely as a way of asserting status by distancing themselves from a drink that they undoubtedly knew to be denigrated by the upper and professional classes. However, while they often simply described themselves as *comerciantes*, many also referenced artisanal or other jobs, suggesting that some artisans turned to alcohol vending in the face of dire economic circumstances.²² Numerous vendors, of alcohol or of other goods, also reported that they lived in their *pulquerías*, shops, or stalls—pointing to the small scale of many such ventures as well as the blurred lines between public and private that characterized much vending (and urban life in general). Similarly, others who did not operate

¹⁹ On artisan's declining positions in the latter half of the nineteenth century, see: Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, chap. 2; Illades, *Hacia la República del Trabajo*.

²⁰ In 1883, for instance, María de Jesús Hernández described herself as a fruit vendor, yet was described by others as selling clothing and blankets. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 830: 1883, José López, Lesiones.

²¹ As Diego Pulido Esteva has noted, in 1914, Mexico City had twice as many drinking establishments as Buenos Aires despite having only one-third the population. Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, 30.

²² For several examples of *pulqueros* describing themselves as artisans or *comerciantes*, see: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 655: 1880, Matías Rojas o Puga and Cristobal Romero, Heridas and Infracción de Obligación; *Ibid.*, Caja 657: 1879, Francisco Luna, Heridas y agresión a la policía; *Ibid.*, Caja 655: 1879, Juan Martínez, José María Calzada, and Juan Rodríguez, Robo; *Ibid.*, Caja 633: 1878, Cayetano García, Lesiones and Homicidio; TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0015, Exp. 003458: 1900; *Ibid.*, Caja 0185, Exp. 034171: 1902.

formal drinking establishments mentioned selling alcohol informally from their homes on a small scale.²³

Whether in the 1870s or later, vending was a highly heterogenous activity marked by a strong hierarchy in terms of status, capital, and vulnerability to unwanted intervention from authorities. Established shops and restaurants ran the gamut from fancy stores and elegant cafés frequented by the wealthy and middle classes, to tiny shops and eateries that catered more to mixed-class or lower- and working-class customers.²⁴ Drinking establishments were broadly divided into restaurants, cantinas, fondas, and pulquerías, declining in status and (broadly) class of the clientele with each step, and those associated with mixed- or lower-class customers were especially targeted for policing by authorities concerned with public disorder.²⁵ Vendors within municipal markets sold from fixed stalls that they operated via licenses from the city government. Usually counting on less capital than shopkeepers, they conducted much of their business in the public eye, and from the Porfiriato onward were increasingly subject to modernizing reforms by authorities concerned that insalubrious market conditions bred disease.²⁶ Their positions were generally more stable than the numerous street vendors, who were most heavily concentrated near markets but could be found throughout the city. Street vendors

²³ In 1879, Blas Mejía ran a pulquería that was “contigua a la casa” where he lived. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Santiago Sugarazo, Homicidio. Manuel Inguanzo ran a booth (*estanquillo*) at the same address as his home. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Francisco Luna, Heridas and Agresión a la Policía. María Serrato Domínguez admitted to selling food and pulque (the latter illegally) from the room where she lived, or possibly just the front room of her home. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1632, Exp. 291880: 1921, Ultrajes a la Policía. María Guadalupe Arroyo Flores ran a small grocery store from her home. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2749, Exp. 580990: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad. In 1882, Jesús Navarro, a rural worker (*labrador*) in Azcapotzalco, mentioned that he sold aguardiente from his home to his neighbors and friends. TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 771: 1882, Jorge Fuentes and Aneclina Navarro, Golpes. On vendors living out of their stalls: Porter, ““And That It Is Custom Makes It Law,”” 131–32.

²⁴ On established shops and the expansion of the upper and middle class during the Porfiriato: Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 56–58.

²⁵ Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, 30–38.

²⁶ Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, 136–51; Bleyntat, *Vendor’s Capitalism*, 45–56 and passim.

themselves ranged from those who set up more-or-less permanent stalls, often outside of markets, to those who, on a permanent or part-time basis, traveled the streets or peddled their wares from *petate* mats on sidewalks and corners. As their work took place entirely in public spaces, street vendors were regularly targeted by regulations and subject to police action, whether for regulatory noncompliance or for simply impeding foot traffic. Many counted on municipal licenses, but they offered little protection against changing regulations and could be difficult to obtain. Although some street vendors could evade regulation through mobility, doing so risked missing out on well-trafficked areas with numerous customers, and physical evasion was likely too much of a hassle for many vendors to rely on it. Many likely hoped that they simply would not be challenged by the relatively few inspectors or police, or that they could convince regulators to grant them a degree of tolerance.²⁷ Vendors' living and working conditions generated practices of solidarity—ranging from collective petitioning to simply talking up the quality of their friends' goods before potential customers—at the same time that competition divided them.²⁸

The general profile of vending set by the late 1800s largely persevered well into the twentieth century, even as the increasing weight of regulation brought about some changes in

²⁷ Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, 151–64 and passim; Porter, ““And That It Is Custom Makes It Law.””

²⁸ Rohlfes goes so far as to argue that “competition between the pulque vendors--not police vigilance--acted as the greatest check against the abuses of Mexico City's drinking laws.” On petitions and competition—including established shopkeepers banding together to petition authorities to remove street vendor competitors—see: Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, chap. 5; Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 138.

In one telling example of solidarity from a court record in 1883, the cart driver Jesús Huerta—who worked for a comerciante—mentioned having come across the street stall of María de Jesús Hernández, the amasia of his friend José López (another vendor). Seeing that she had a customer, Huerta disguised that he knew her and began to talk up the quality of her wares so that she could get a better price (“le empezó a encarecer la manta diciéndole que era muy buena”). TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 830: 1883, José López, Lesiones.

vending conditions (particularly in markets and established shops).²⁹ As the city's growth accelerated, and overwhelmed markets proved unable to provide food and material goods to the rapidly expanding city, street vending remained vital as a source of employment and sustenance alike.³⁰ By the 1940s, street vendors were almost literally too numerous to count: the city government's Departamento de Mercados proved unable to carry out a vendor's census in 1947 due to the overwhelming number of vendors and simple lack of institutional capacity. Many street vendors were believed to belong to a "floating population" of rural migrants who readily moved between low-wage occupations, spurring competition with more established comerciantes.³¹ Perhaps the most important development in the postrevolutionary period had little to do with changing social profiles, but instead reflected revolutionary politics. Comerciantes became increasingly organized, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, and their organizations were gradually brought into the emerging corporatist political structure. Vendors' organizations served not only as means of negotiating with political authorities and exerting a degree of central control, but also as tools in conflicts between vendors.³² However, despite their abilities to negotiate with political authorities, vendors—especially those at the lower reaches of access to capital, respectability, and simple privacy—remained vulnerable to intervention by regulatory officials, especially the police.

²⁹ Porter argues that market vending became increasingly dominated by men as ordinances forced out many female vendors. Porter, "And That It Is Custom Makes It Law," 128–29.

³⁰ Some vendors were recent migrants or temporary visitors from the capital, like María Trinidad Beltrán Estrada, who came to the capital from Morelos every eight days to sell herbs in Mercado de la Merced. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 3952, Exp. 693213: 1947, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones.

³¹ The Cámara Nacional de Comercio estimated in 1945 that there were some 70,000 small-scale vendors in the city, only 2% of them based in markets. On efforts to count vendors, and portrayals as a floating population, see: Bleyntat, "The Business of Governing," 362, 364.

³² Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas*; Bleyntat, "The Business of Governing."

Regulations and Public Order

As discussed in the Introduction, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by a clear expansion in both regulations and in the institutions tasked with enforcing them, as city authorities sought to modernize the capital and its residents for the purposes of economic development. Their efforts responded to changing notions of modernity, new ideas of public health and racial degeneration, and, more generally, Mexico's increasing insertion into global networks of trade and capital.³³ Whether Porfirian or post-revolutionary, authorities particularly focused on the city's public spaces.³⁴ The subsistence and leisure activities of the city's lower and working classes, including vending, were particularly targeted as threatening the health of the population and as generative of crime and disorder.³⁵

The policing of vending hinged on an ever-changing regulatory landscape. City and federal regulations sought to control disfavored practices—especially drinking, but also certain kinds of vending—in order to modernize the city and its population. But many regulations proved difficult if not impossible to fully enforce. While some, such as a blanket ban on

³³ See, for instance: Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*; Vitz, *A City on a Lake*; Konove, *Black Market Capital*, chap. 6; Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*; Moya Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura, historia y poder*; Emily Wakild, "Naturalizing Modernity: Urban Parks, Public Gardens and Drainage Projects in Porfirian Mexico City," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 101–23; Piccato, *City of Suspects*.

³⁴ The streets and plazas of the capital, with their concentrated displays of poverty in areas frequented by elites, were among the most visible evidence of Mexico's purported failure to modernize. John Lear has argued that Porfirian elites' liberalism made them less willing to intervene in private spaces which were largely seen as beyond the appropriate reach of the state. Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 40. Postrevolutionary authorities were far more willing to lay claim to ostensibly private spaces and relations as suitable targets for state intervention. However, the government remained unable to effectively cope with the capital's continuing growth, leaving public spaces as still the most prominent arena of state intervention. On the limits of early postrevolutionary housing efforts, see Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, chap. 3.

³⁵ Porter, "'And That It Is Custom Makes It Law'"; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*; Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, chap. 1; Piccato, *City of Suspects*. See also the increasing regulation of prostitution for similar reasons, in Mexico City and beyond. Katherine Elaine Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Fabiola Bailón Vásquez, *Mujeres en el servicio doméstico y en la prostitución: sobrevivencia, control y vida cotidiana en la Oaxaca porfiriana*, Primera edición. (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2014).

pulquerías within the city's central districts, were relatively straightforward to implement, others, such as sanitary requirements or restrictions on popular practices, were practically impossible to enforce fully in the face of the city's limited and unequal access to public services, regulatory contradictions, comerciantes' pursuit of profits, the limited (through growing) capacity of state institutions, and simple popular disdain. In effect, what many regulations did instead was to provide a means by which police and other regulatory authorities could readily find pretexts for intervention in a variety of spaces.

Regulations on vending and other commercial activities were marked by numerous contradictions, both internally and in comparison with living and working conditions in the fast-growing city. Many officials saw small-scale vending and food production as a vital source of tax revenue and a useful means of ensuring the provision of sustenance to the population, producing internal contradictions and numerous exceptions in many regulations.³⁶ The 1912 *Reglamento para la venta de comestibles y bebidas en el Distrito Federal*, for instance, took pains to bar the production and sale of foodstuffs from residences in an effort to improve sanitary conditions, yet it contained rather vague exemptions for certain small producers.³⁷ Other regulations sought to impose spatial restrictions. In the face of the pronounced poverty of much of the capital's population, stipulations that food production or sales, or alcohol vending, take place in buildings designed for that purpose or in special rooms clearly separated from dwellings, were practically impossible to consistently enforce.³⁸ The 1931 *Reglamento del Comercio Semi-*

³⁶ Porter, "'And That It Is Custom Makes It Law,'" 143n12; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*, 154–55.

³⁷ Art. 106 in: "Reglamento para la venta de comestibles y bebidas en el Distrito Federal," *Diario Oficial*, 16 November 1912, p.1-7.

³⁸ Art. 105 of the 1912 *Reglamento para la venta de comestibles y bebidas en el Distrito Federal* required that establishments engaged in the production or sale of foodstuffs were to be clean, sufficiently ventilated and lit, and to have drinkable water, conditions which were difficult to find in many parts of the city. For the regulation, see: *Diario Oficial*, 16 November 1912, p. 1-7. Similarly, the 1904 *Reglamento de Carnicerías* stipulated that butcher

Fijo y Ambulante en el Distrito Federal, which sought to standardize regulations on street vending, barred stalls and ambulatory vendors from the city center—a disaster for many street vendors, who depended on the area’s dense concentration of foot traffic for their livelihoods.³⁹ Although vendors’ vociferous protests and frequent noncompliance pushed the government to reverse the ban in 1932, the regulation’s other provisions still stood, including rules against ambulatory vendors operating near established shops that sold similar goods.⁴⁰ The 1951 *Reglamento de Mercados* went farther in imposing wide-ranging spatial restrictions, barring puestos from being set up not only in front of schools and pulquerías, but also “in front of buildings that constitute centers of work, whether they be official or private,” a regulation likely impossible to fully enforce given the continued frequency of productive labor in residences and small shops scattered throughout the city.⁴¹ Drinking establishments, nightclubs, and brothels faced even harsher spatial requirements, barring them from being located within 100 or 200 meters (depending on the regulation) of churches, factories, schools, public buildings, and, as one 1931 regulation vaguely put it, “other similar institutions.”⁴² In practice, such regulations

shops could not be located in buildings that also held residences, while also including a variety of material requirements (specific types of display tables, access to drinkable water, specific types of floor material, etc.). “Reglamento de Carnicerías” of 14 April 1904, in: Manuel Dublán and José María Lozano, eds., *Legislación mexicana, ó, Colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la República* (México: Impr. de E. Dublán, 1876), Vol. 36, 304-305.

On living conditions in the capital around the same time, see: Alberto J. Pani, *La higiene en México* (México: Imprenta de J. Ballezá, 1916).

³⁹ Art. 3 in: “Reglamento del Comercio Semi-Fijo y Ambulante en el Distrito Federal,” *DOF*, 27 March 1931, Segunda Sección, p.12-15.

⁴⁰ On the 1932 modification, see: Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas*, 71. “Decreto que modifica el Reglamento del Comercio Semi-Fijo y Ambulante en el Distrito Federal,” *DOF*, 14 April 1932, Primera Sección, p.7-8.

The provision in the 1931 regulation was a concession to established shopkeepers. Art. 32 in: “Reglamento del Comercio Semi-Fijo y Ambulante en el Distrito Federal,” *DOF*, 27 March 1931, Segunda Sección, p.12-15.

⁴¹ Ibid., Art. 65. Fracción IV bans puestos “frente a los edificios que constituyan centros de trabajo, sean oficiales o particulares”.

⁴² Quote (“y demás instituciones similares”) from Art. 3 of the “Reglamento de Café-Cantantes o Cabarets y Salones de Baile,” *DOF*, 27 March 1931, Segunda Sección, pp. 10-12. In early 1910, authorities stipulated that new cantinas or pulquerías could only be licensed if they were over 200 meters from the nearest similar establishment;

gave authorities broad discretionary power to crack down on street vending and other activities seen as fueling disorder.

Alcohol, in particular, faced especially heavy controls. Over the course of the nineteenth century, drunkenness shifted from being seen as a private vice to a social problem demanding authorities' attention.⁴³ During the Porfiriato, officials issued a number of regulations seeking to limit alcohol sales and discourage drinking, as well as to raise always-scarce municipal tax revenue.⁴⁴ As with regulations on food production and sale discussed above, alcohol regulations were often difficult to enforce and subject to changes. Efforts to prevent bars from being set up in private residences in 1903 had to be partially retracted in 1905, likely due to the difficulty of fully enforcing such ordinances in the face of conditions discussed above.⁴⁵ Other regulations, such as those that prevented restaurants and cantinas from selling alcohol unless it was purchased with a meal, led to frequent interpretive disputes over just what counted as a meal, or over customers who claimed to have been finishing drinks after eating.⁴⁶ After the Revolution, regulations on drinking increased still further, spurred on by the revolutionary government's

they also ordered that ninety-five recently closed drinking establishments would still be counted as open for the purposes of the regulation, and further banned drinking establishments on the outskirts of the city where there were few police. Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 42, 98: Acuerdo, 2 February 1910; Vol. 42, 98-99: Acuerdo, 11 February 1910. On the regulation of prostitution, see: Bliss, *Compromised Positions*; Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas*, 57-69.

⁴³ Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, 110-18.

⁴⁴ Regulations on drinking establishments were extremely repetitive. See: *Colección de leyes y disposiciones (1884)*, Vol. II, 234: Reglamento de Cantinas, 28 September 1878; 292-293: Reglamento de Cantinas, Fondas y Figones, 17 July 1881; 440-444: Reglamento para Fondas y Figones, 6 November 1884; 457-462: Pulquerías, 27 November 1884; Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 17, 131-134: Reglamento de Pulquerías, 19 February 1885; Vol. 35, 1438-1443: Reglamento de expendios de bebidas embriagantes al menudeo, 20 December 1903; Vol. 36, 1-8: Reglamento, 28 January 1904; Vol. 37, 9-10: Reglamento, 2 January 1905; Vol. 42, 98: Acuerdo, 2 February 1910; *Ibid.*, 98-99: Acuerdo, 11 February 1910; *Ibid.*, 171: Sección Tercera, 15 July 1910.

⁴⁵ The 1903 regulation was supplemented by 1905 reforms that allowed cantinas to be placed in the entryway to, or in communication with, residences, pool halls, shops, and bakeries, as long as the connecting door was located behind the counter and used only by the owner and employees. Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 35, 1438-1443: Reglamento de expendios de bebidas embriagantes al menudeo, 20 December 1903; Vol. 37, 9-10: Reglamento, 2 January 1905.

⁴⁶ Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, 97.

increasing efforts to modernize, moralize, and sanitize Mexican society and the a growing influence of the temperance movement. Unlike the United States in the same years, full prohibition never became a reality—alcohol tax revenue remained too important for the postrevolutionary state’s fragile finances—but officials still implemented a series of restrictive measures.⁴⁷ Repeated regulations sought to ban women from working in drinking establishments, or even to prevent them from drinking in such places. Unsurprisingly, given how many women made their livelihood from selling alcohol, as well as the widespread popularity of drinks like pulque and the lack of nonalcoholic replacements like clean drinking water in some parts of the city, such attempts generally met with mass noncompliance.⁴⁸

It is not surprising that the growing regulatory regime of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century harbored such contradictions and faced such difficulties in implementation. After all, regulations were aspirational tools meant to change existing society. Nonetheless, authorities’ failure to effectively improve material conditions for much of the city’s population meant that arbitrary enforcement was practically baked into the regulatory regime, as many vendors complained. When, in 1900, a police inspector began to impede vendors in Tacuba from selling on the street, one complained in her petition to authorities that she had been closed down based “on what law or Regulation, I do not know.”⁴⁹ After police attempted to arrest a fonda

⁴⁷ Pulido Esteva, 133–37; Jesús Méndez Reyes, “De crudas y moralidad: campañas antialcohólicas en los gobiernos de la posrevolución (1916-1931),” in *Cruda realidad: producción, consumo y fiscalidad de las bebidas alcohólicas en México y América Latina, siglos XVII-XX*, ed. Ernest Sánchez Santiró (México: Instituto Mora, 2007), 243–69; Bliss, “For the Health of the Nation”; Cecilia Autrique Escobar, “Los orígenes de los movimientos prohibicionistas del alcohol y las drogas. El caso de México (1917-1928),” *Historia y Grafía*, no. 53 (December 2019): 145–83.

⁴⁸ Such regulations were based on Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution, which barred women (and children) from hazardous work. The first such regulation was issued in 1919, with a further attempt in 1931. Porter, ““And That It Is Custom Makes It Law,”” 121; Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, 82; Bliss, *Compromised Positions*, 173–75.

⁴⁹ The vendor in question, Damiana Ruiz, was one of five comerciantes who petitioned the district Prefecto Político to complain that a police Inspector from the 7th Demarcación posted gendarmes on their streets and blocked their sales. They alleged that he was violating Tacuba’s municipal authority, harming their ability to make a living,

employee in 1922 for dumping garbage in the Plazuela de Mixcalco, the fonda owner challenged the police, saying that she had no other choice as the trash collectors were late, and pointing out that others around the plaza also left trash there but went unpunished.⁵⁰

The city's police—especially but not exclusively the Gendarmería or Policía Preventiva—would be at the center the ever-shifting regulatory legal regime over public spaces and activities.⁵¹ Police were granted wide powers over public spaces. Police regulations, whether from the late nineteenth century or 1940s, included extensive lists of police duties that impinged directly on a wide variety of vendors' activities. Many of these regulations, such as those that aimed to prevent people from impeding foot traffic, obviously weighed particularly heavily on ambulatory street vendors and stall operators, although they were also intended to ensure that shopkeepers, pulqueros, and the like kept their business within the physical confines of their establishments—a regulation that newspapers claimed even established comerciantes violated, to pedestrians' detriment. Other regulations, such as those tasking police with maintaining the quality of foodstuffs, were clearly more readily applied against those who sold food on the street or from open stalls where production was clearly visible to passersby and police alike, rather than from more established restaurants.⁵²

and that he ignored that they had paid their taxes and were not blocking traffic. Ruiz wrote a separate denunciation a few days later, saying that the Inspector had specifically blocked her from running her small pulquería, based “no sé en que ley o Reglamento,” and forcing her to close down as she had no employees. Local authorities evidently believed that the inspector had indeed acted arbitrarily and were responsive to the comerciantes' petitions, getting the federal government to order the Inspector to withdraw. AHCM, Municipalidades, Azcapotzalco, Justicia, Caja 5, Exp. 26: Letters of 29 April 1900 and 2 May 1900, Gobierno del Distrito Federal responses of 2 and 4 May 1900.

⁵⁰ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1687, Exp. 302127: 1922, Abuso de Autoridad.

⁵¹ Ingrid Bleynat has argued that police became especially important in regulating vending after the 1903 restructuring of the Federal District, which removed the Ayuntamiento from a regulatory role and dispersed regulatory functions among a wide range of authorities who were often forced to turn to police to make up for limited manpower. Bleynat, *Vendor's Capitalism*, 67–68.

⁵² The 1897 *Reglamento de las obligaciones del gendarme* included one complete chapter (Ch. 3) on “Deberes del gendarme para conservar expedita la vía pública.” Article 45 specifically tasked police with keeping not just ambulatory vendors, but also shops, pulquerías, and other establishments, from placing goods or equipment

Police shared the task of regulation with other institutions, at times leading to conflicts. Although the number of other regulatory officials—market fee collectors, sanitary inspectors, and the like—expanded over time, police continued to have similar responsibilities. The 1903 regulation on alcohol sales, for instance, tasked both police *Comisarios* and the Consejo Superior de Salubridad with filing written reports on whether applicants for licenses met requirements.⁵³ Similarly, a proposed market regulation from 1904 would have given enforcement powers to city market inspectors and gendarmes alike with no real difference in their duties.⁵⁴ The 1951 *Reglamento de Mercados* tasked not only agents of the Federal District’s Departamento de Mercados, but also the police, with enforcement.⁵⁵ Police officials complained with some frequency that health inspectors and other authorities in the city government regularly ordered gendarmes away from their posts to enforce sanitary regulations or to check on cantina licenses and tax compliance, saying that they kept police from carrying out their many other duties. Yet their complaints missed the degree to which such tasks were in fact central police duties.⁵⁶ Such

in the street or sidewalks and blocking traffic (foot or otherwise) The fifth chapter, “De las disposiciones municipales y sanitarias,” emphasized public cleanliness, and included three separate articles on ensuring the quality of foodstuffs (Arts. 82, 85, 86). Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, Vol. 27, 75-83.

For one newspaper’s complaint that, among many other problems, police allowed shopkeepers to block streets with their merchandise, see: “El torno del Hogar,” *El Diario del Hogar*, 20 April 1882, 1-2.

⁵³ Police officials were also to file three reports per year on alcohol sales in their districts. *Reglamento de expendios de bebidas embriagantes al menudeo* (1903), Art. 4 Fracciones IX and X, Art. 14.

⁵⁴ AHCM, Ayuntamiento-Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Consejo Superior de Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Reglamentos, Vol. 643, Exp. 12: Proyecto de Reglamento de Policía para los Mercados del Distrito Federal, 9 May 1904. Article 13 stated “Tanto la policía como los empleados [del ramo de mercados], cuidarán de la observancia de este Reglamento,” and further stated that violators were to be sent to the nearest police Comisaría, and from there to the disposition of the Governor.

⁵⁵ “Reglamento de Mercados,” *Diario Oficial*, 1 June 1951, pp. 6-15; Art. 25. Article 24 also noted that, in the case of matters not specifically referred to in the regulation, officials were to apply the dispositions given by (in declining order of relevance) the Preventive Police Regulation, the Transit Regulation, the Sanitary Code, the Building and Urban Services Code, and finally Civil and Mercantile Law. The prominent place occupied by the Preventive Police Regulation is notable.

⁵⁶ AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección de Policía, Archivo Correspondencia y Depósito, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 100: June 1925 complaint from Inspector General de Policía about Salubridad employees misusing gendarmes; and *Ibid.*, Exp. 114: July 1925 complaint from a Comisario that a Federal District Inspector had been ordering gendarmes to check on cantinas that fell behind on taxes.

conflicts stemmed not just from regulations that provided for multiple overlapping institutional jurisdictions, but also from the fact that the police were far more numerous than other regulatory bodies, making them a useful source of auxiliary manpower for other agents.⁵⁷ The 1909 federal budget, for instance, provided for only thirty-one market tax collectors, twenty-six health inspectors in the Servicio de Sanidad, and just six agents for inspecting the quality of foodstuffs in the entirety of the Federal District.⁵⁸ Around the same time, as discussed in Chap. 2, there were roughly 3,000 gendarmes, most of them concentrated on the streets, where they would have come into daily contact with vendors.

By law, ordinary foot police had limits on their regulatory authority. Many ordinances stipulated that they were to be considered auxiliaries to more specialized officials, although in practice the limited number of the latter would have meant that much day-to-day vigilance would be exercised by gendarmes.⁵⁹ Gendarmes themselves could not directly levy fines on violators, but instead had to take them to the nearest Comisaría, where the appropriate sanction would be applied by police officials and, starting in 1929, by Jueces Calificadores, officials stationed in police Comisarías and tasked with assessing regulatory infractions and other disorder that did not merit the criminal courts' attention.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, gendarmes held a great deal of power in

⁵⁷ This situation appears to have continued well after the revolution, although it is difficult to find information on the size of other inspection offices. As Rodrigo Meneses Reyes has noted, one never-implemented 1937 project complained of a lack of sufficient personnel to supervise street commerce. Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas*, 71–73.

⁵⁸ Federal Budget of 18 May 1908, Dublan y Lozano, Vol. 40, pp. 360, 363, and 516.

⁵⁹ Besides the examples discussed above, the 1931 regulation on Cabarets and Dance Halls tasked Federal District inspectors with enforcement, and stipulated that police were to be subordinated to them. “Reglamento de Café-cantantes o Cabarets y Salones de Baile,” *Diario Oficial*, 27 March 1931, Segunda Sección, pp. 10-12; Art. 5.

⁶⁰ “Acuerdo por el cual se establece el procedimiento que deberá observarse en la imposición de castigos por infracciones a los Reglamentos gubernativas de Policía y Tráfico,” *Diario Oficial*, 15 April 1929, pp. 6-7.

Despite the Acuerdo's statement that police officials were not to themselves impose such sanctions, many appear to have done so anyway. In a 1937 communication that highlights police's dissatisfaction with the Acuerdo, the Jefe de Policía stated that only high officials—including Jefes de Oficina, Inspectores de Policía, and Comandantes de Policía—could levy fines on vendors, despite the Acuerdo giving such powers only to Jueces

practice, especially through their discretionary ability to choose whether to take action against violations or to look the other way.

Ultimately, police's position allowed them to mediate between the city's vast but uneven regulatory apparatus and the people they were tasked with policing. With regulations so often vague, contradictory, or practically impossible to apply in the face of adverse material conditions and pressing consumer demand, police at all levels—but especially street-level gendarmes—became not straightforward enforcers of legislation, but rather exercised substantial discretionary authority over what to enforce and when. In practice, as will be discussed, police used their position for personal gain in any number of ways, fueling entrenched corruption within (and without) the institution. Yet at the same time, many vendors came to depend on police discretion, whether given as a personal favor or guaranteed by bribery, as a means of gaining and maintaining their highly contingent access to the city. However, in comparison to other regulatory authorities, police could more readily draw upon violence, or its credible threat, as a resource, which could be used by police and their clients alike. While other city authorities may well have been willing and able to use force to uphold regulations (including extralegally), police were unique in the range of coercive powers granted to them by law and normalized in practice.⁶¹ The result was that vendors' fragile access to the city and its markets was often marked and mediated by discretionary police power.

Calificadores. The Jefe de Policía urged that rules be changed to allow all members of the police, including street-level gendarmes, to levy fines. He argued that doing so would strengthen the moral authority of the police, making them more respected and bringing them in line with police in (unspecified) other, modern countries. His request does not seem to have been carried out. AGN, Archivos Presidenciales, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 1029, Exp. 564.5/389: Communication of 10 August 1937, Jefe de Policía to Jefe del DDF.

⁶¹ A full analysis of other regulatory officials is beyond the range of this chapter. However, scholars like Benjamin Smith have noted that tax collection was often marked by coercion and violence—a conclusion bolstered by certain details of the 1937 court case discussed in the introduction and later in this chapter. Such violence, as well as other factors (including, as Thomas Rath has discussed, the Mexican military's regular involvement in internal policing), challenges the typical formulation of the police as the only institution able to enact state-backed violence

Police and Vendors

Comerciantes certainly understood the importance of having police on their side, and worked toward that end in multiple ways. During the period of municipal autonomy from 1917 to 1929, for instance, vendors in the outlying towns of the Federal District took advantage of the decentralization of policing to exert influence over local police forces, as shown by aspiring gendarmes' letters of recommendation. In Tacuba, for instance, of the thirty-two new gendarmes who were hired from January to March of 1920 (and for whom records survive), at least twenty-four (75%) were recommended by at least one comerciante, and fourteen (44%) had comerciantes as both of their recommenders. Vendors of varying types wrote at least 62% of all letters of recommendation. Many comerciantes recommended multiple gendarmes. Aquilino Sánchez Rubén, owner of El Puerto de Malaga (likely either a cantina or a shop), recommended four gendarmes, while Eugenio Mercado of the Cantina La Corona and J. García Anaya of the shop El Chin Chun Chan recommended three each; five more vendors (as well as two men whose occupations were not given) recommended two gendarmes each. Of the instances where the type of vendor can be determined, a plurality of recommendations—sixteen—came from shopkeepers, but ten came from cantina owners, and butchers wrote a further five. Overall, letters of recommendation for new police were more likely than not to come from comerciantes who owned fixed shops, many of which were established enough that their owners had custom

internally. Nonetheless, it must be granted that there is a difference between the open use of violence allowed by police regulations, and the legal gray area or outright illegality of other institutions' use of violence. Despite being focused on American policing, Micol Seigel's reflection on police as "violence workers" is useful here, especially in its emphasis on the interconnectivity of discretion and violence. Smith, "Building a State on the Cheap"; Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*; Micol Seigel, *Violence Work: State Power and the Limits of the Police* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018).

stamps that they used in the letters. Only two recommendations came from owners of stalls (*tendajones*), and none seem to have been sent by ambulatory vendors.⁶² There are, of course, many potential explanations as to why comerciantes would make up the majority of recommenders. Most obviously, established shop owners were undoubtedly useful recommenders. Their position gave them a claim to respectability but also made them highly accessible to lower- and working-class aspiring gendarmes.⁶³ In some cases it is clear that aspiring police provided a letter for vendors to simply sign, indicating that, at least in these instances, the initiative came more from police than from comerciantes. However, given gendarmes' centrality to enforcing regulations on commercial establishments, it seems likely that many comerciantes were happy to have some sort of connection with, or leverage over, those charged with watching over them. In any case, municipal authorities do not seem to have been worried about conflicts of interest, as they approved all the applications.

But influencing hiring was far from the most prevalent connection between police and vendors. Instead, gendarmes' relationships with comerciantes were largely generated through daily contact on the street. As mentioned in Chapter Two, despite criticism, gendarmes were more often than not posted to street corners, or in less-policed areas assigned patrol routes, and

⁶² AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacuba de Morelos, Policía, Caja 39, Exp. 7 (January 1920), 8 (February 1920), and 9 (March 1920). Many recommenders did not give their occupations, and some letters are practically illegible. It is possible that a higher proportion of the letters than discussed above came from vendors. All signatories were male, judging by names.

⁶³ In contrast, the other respectable figures that gendarmes turned to for recommendations appear to have been much less accessible. One aspiring gendarme had worked as a domestic worker for his two recommenders, one a doctor and the other an employee in the Departamento de Justicia. *Ibid.*, Exp. 7: Hiring Record for José Angeles. Another, who had previously worked as a municipal gendarme in the municipality of Guadalupe Hidalgo, was recommended by the Secretary of that town's Ayuntamiento (*Ibid.*, Exp. 9: Hiring Record for Miguel Villanueva). A third was recommended by a military bureaucrat and an administrator at the Panteón Francés cemetery; his connection to them is not stated (*Ibid.*, Exp. 9: Hiring Record for Vicente Sánchez).

One of Nicolás Ruiz's recommenders ran the Tienda La Elegancia in central Mexico City. He probably would not have come into much contact with Tacuba's police force, and was likely not seeking to improve relations with the police there. It is more likely that simple proximity and personal relationship generated his recommendation, as Ruiz lived nearby in the capital (*Ibid.*, Exp. 7: Hiring Record for Nicolás Ruiz).

tended to be kept in fixed spaces for some time. In their assigned areas, gendarmes regularly came into contact with comerciantes, who either had fixed shops or stalls, or, if they were street vendors, tended to regularly sell from specific sites in order to maintain a customer base. Moreover, higher police officials exercised only limited oversight over street gendarmes. Critics regularly charged that officials' patrols to check in with gendarmes in their sector were carried out too infrequently and with a near-clockwork regularity that allowed gendarmes to easily avoid discipline.⁶⁴ Conditions were ripe for gendarmes to form relationships with those they were tasked with policing—especially vendors.

Gendarmes often drew upon the connections formed between them and vendors for their own purposes. Many police accused of abuse of authority turned to comerciantes either to testify to their good character or as favorable eye witnesses, even if of questionable veracity.

When gendarme Teodoro Reza was accused of having brutally beaten José Serrano for public urination in Magdalena Contreras in 1902, he was able to file a petition signed by twenty-eight “comerciantes and neighbors” from the town certifying his “moderation and fine manners” in

⁶⁴ Sources are equivocal as to how police patrol practices changed over time or across space. Some comisaría documents suggest that, in at least some Demarcaciones, officials cycled gendarmes through different assignments every few days or weeks, in an apparent effort to reduce potentially corrupting interpersonal ties with those they were assigned to police. Yet such documents need to be balanced against the regularity of statements in court testimony that certain gendarmes were posted for months or years at a time to the same corner or patrol route. For an administrative record showing some degree of cycling gendarmes through varying assignments, see: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 411, Exp. 7: Police Postings for Tacubaya, July 1928; For examples of gendarmes being posted to specific street corners for at least a year, see: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho; Ibid., Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho; Ibid., Caja 2976, Exp. 499459: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Robo; Ibid., Caja 3004, Exp. 503316: 1937, Robo, Lesiones. In several court records, police officials and *cabos* mentioned carrying out patrols checking in on other police. For example: TSJDF, S.XIX, Caja 657: 1879, Francisco Luna, Heridas y Agresión a la Policía; Ibid., Caja 655: 1880, Matías Rojas o Puga and Cristobal Romero, Heridas y Infracción de Obligación; TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2644, Exp. 548813: 1933, Privación de Libertad y Abuso de Autoridad; Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho. Criticisms of this practice as insufficient are discussed in Chapter Two.

carrying out his duties.⁶⁵ The gendarme J. Jesús Rivas González presented a similar letter after being charged by Judicial Police with extorting vendors in his patrol zone just south of the Zócalo in 1937.⁶⁶ When gendarmes Rodrigo Sierra and Jesús Andrade were both charged with excessive violence in carrying out their duties in separate cases in 1901, both produced comerciantes as favorable witnesses. Andrade, accused of having wrongfully shot and injured a man while breaking up a fight on the Plazuela de Santa Cruz Acatlán, pulled in two comerciantes who had shops near the plaza to testify in his favor. One of them even stated that Andrade had stopped by his shop to say hello before the incident, suggesting some degree of personal connection. For Sierra's part, after being accused of beating a man at a street corner for no reason, he produced two favorable witnesses: one of his neighbors, and a cake vendor who sold from the intersection. In both of these cases, the witnesses aroused suspicion among the judges. Both police took a substantial amount of time to name them as witnesses, which judges took as evidence that their testimony was faked.⁶⁷ Ultimately, gendarmes were likely so apt to turn to comerciantes for favorable testimony due to the weight of interpersonal interactions between

⁶⁵ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0185, Exp. 034171: 1902, Teodoro Reza, Lesiones. "comerciantes y vecinos", "moderación y finas maneras". Reza was found not guilty, although the letter of support likely had less to do with the decision than did serious inconsistencies in witness testimony.

⁶⁶ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 3039, Exp. 521205: 1937, Appeal, Abuso de Autoridad. The letter helped Rivas little, perhaps because the court wondered if the vendors had been coerced into signing the letter in the same way that they had reportedly been coerced into paying protection money.

⁶⁷ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0062, Exp. 010995: 1901, Appeal, Jesús Andrade, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones; *Ibid.*, Caja 0097, Exp. 019184: 1901, Appeal, Rodrigo Sierra, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. Sierra was found guilty by the court, and furthermore lost his appeal. The appeals court unanimously held that his witnesses, including the cake vendor but especially his neighbor, were untrustworthy. The magistrates noted that Sierra had not mentioned them as witnesses in his initial testimony, and that he had been left free for the six days between the incident and his calling witnesses. This implied, in the court's eyes, that he had induced them to falsely testify in his favor.

For Andrade's part, he was originally found guilty, but won his appeal, the majority of the higher court deciding that his witnesses were in fact credible. However, Magistrate Valentín Canalizo wrote a dissenting opinion—a rarity in such cases—pointing to the length of time between the incident and Andrade's calling of the comerciantes as witnesses as evidence that they were not to be trusted. Canalizo also emphasized the discrepancies between Andrade's statements and the testimony of his witnesses, which were contradictory in several details.

them in the course of their work.⁶⁸ Comerciantes often either had a favorable opinion of the police who frequented their shops and enforced (or not) regulations, or, as judges must have suspected in Sierra's and Andrade's case, they could be readily induced by other means to go to court in gendarmes' favor.

Such ties could go the other way, as well, as shown by the case of Domingo Tapia. In fact, Tapia's multiple experiences with the criminal justice system from 1920 to 1937 suggest the broad spectrum of relationships that could form between vendors and police. Tapia, who in 1920 lived in Mixcoac with his wife, her sister, his military officer brother-in-law, and his children, divided his time between working in a bakery and selling baked goods from a stall just outside the Mercado de Mixcoac. He was also, according to his wife and brother-in-law, a drunkard who regularly neglected and quarreled with his family. After one argument that ended in Tapia leaving home to spend the night in his stall, his brother-in-law and wife went before the Mixcoac Comisario to accuse Tapia of habitual drunkenness, defamation and calumny, and general mistreatment of his family, leading to his prompt arrest. Although his brother-in-law quickly dropped the rest of the charges out of familial considerations, he pressed for Tapia to be

⁶⁸ Similar to the above-mentioned cases, after being accused of abuse of authority in 1935, the gendarme Javier Villaseñor Pelayo presented two character witnesses in his favor: one another police agent, and one a comerciante. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad and Cohecho. In 1946, a month after being accused of aiding in the escape of two suspects rather than delivering them by car to the Ministerio Público office as ordered, gendarme Catarino Cruz Juárez brought in the comerciante José Sánchez Aguilar to testify on his behalf. Sánchez claimed that he had been at a park one month prior and had seen a gendarme (Cruz) get out of a car and attempt to arrest the other passengers. He further said that, a month later, he came upon the same gendarme in the same park (where Cruz was desperately searching for witnesses) and asked him what had happened in the arrest attempt. Notably, Sánchez lived and worked in a market in Colonia Doctores, far from the park in question. Equally notably, Cruz lived in western Colonia Obrera just a few blocks from Sánchez's stall, and likely would have visited the market with some regularity. Given this information, Sánchez's rather unlikely testimony seems less likely than that Cruz simply turned to a market vendor he was familiar with to falsely testify on his behalf. *Ibid.*, Caja 3817, Exp. 673831: 1946, Delito Oficial. Similarly, after police were accused of extortion and violence in one 1942 case, they brought in the comerciante Ramón Huerta Placencia as a favorable witness; he admitted to being friends with one of the gendarmes present. *Ibid.*, Caja 3409, Exp. 622083: 1942, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho, Lesiones.

punished “as severely as possible in order to see if it corrects him of the vice of drunkenness and intoxication.”⁶⁹

The case against Tapia appeared strong. Not only had his family members accused him, but police records showed that he had been briefly jailed four times within the past year for fighting, incidents that the Comisario said had been spurred by drunkenness. However, Tapia counted on good relationships with other members of the criminal justice system, and effectively denied the charge. Of the six witnesses he named to testify to his good character, two were gendarmes, and two were employees of the court who regularly came to his stall and the bakery where he worked. After just three of his witnesses testified that he was an honorable, trusted worker who had never been seen drunk, the judge dismissed the charges against Tapia. The case suggests the utility of vendor’s interpersonal ties with police and other authorities, as well as their limits. Although he was not found to be a habitual drunk, his good relationships with (at least some) authorities did not prevent him from spending five nights in jail during the investigation, nor had they prevented him from being repeatedly arrested earlier.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, they helped him to avoid the severe punishment that his brother-in-law had demanded.

At the same time, the relationships that formed out of necessity and proximity between vendors and the police around them were not always so useful, as Tapia’s later appearance in

⁶⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1595, Exp. 285968: 1920, Embriaguez Habitual. Tapia’s brother in law stated that “por consideraciones especiales,” he was dropping the other charges, but noted: “pero que suplicaba atentamente se le castigara lo más severamente posible a fin de ver si se corrige del vicio de la embriaguez e intoxicación.”

⁷⁰ Ibid. Tapia had been arrested in the previous year on two charges of riña, one of riña y lesiones, and one of agresión a la policía. Despite this latter charge, he seemed to have good relationships with police. Besides the witnesses noted above, Tapia also believed that the gendarme who had arrested him would testify in his favor, and noted he had kindly allowed Tapia to return home to get a zarape shawl before bringing him into custody. The judge heard the testimony of two court employees and of a coworker of Tapia’s before dismissing charges, and the gendarmes Tapia cited did not end up giving testimony.

criminal court suggests.⁷¹ By 1937, seventeen years after the above-mentioned case, Tapia's circumstances had declined. Perhaps because of the economic disruptions of the Great Depression, he no longer worked in a bakery, and instead of a respectable stall on the edge of the market, he now sold from "a tiny mobile stand" (*un puestecito mobile* [sic]) in the streets near the Market. His domestic problems had apparently worsened, and on 12 July 1937 he was arrested for public drunkenness and reportedly beating his wife. His relations with the police had also declined precipitously. During the arrest, gendarmes beat Tapia and his teenaged son (after the latter tried to intervene) and reportedly stole cash from the latter's pocket. According to Tapia, who unsurprisingly denied all charges against him, the brutal arrest was just the latest incident in a long-standing pattern of harassment from the arresting gendarme, Guillermo Lara Sánchez. Six years ago, he said, Lara had attempted to seduce Tapia's wife and had sexually assaulted her and his daughter, leading Tapia to (fruitlessly) file formal charges against the gendarme. Ever since then, Tapia said, Lara had repeatedly misused his police authority for retaliation by falsely accusing him of regulatory infractions and minor crimes. For his part, Lara claimed that Tapia hated him for imposing regulatory fines, and framed the accusations against him as Tapia's own attempts at reprisal for Lara doing his job.⁷² As Tapia's case suggests, the

⁷¹ Despite several differences, it is clear that the cases refer to the same person. In 1920 Tapia said he was born in the town of Xoco in Mixcoac, whereas in 1937 he said he was born in Mexico City. In the latter case, he was likely simply giving a more general location, and by 1937 Xoco had been increasingly absorbed into the expanding urban fabric. While Tapia was illiterate in 1920 and literate by 1937, he likely learned to read in an adult education program or elsewhere in the interim; indeed, as measured by national censuses, the adult literacy rate in Mexico City expanded in the postrevolutionary decades despite the influx of less-literate rural migrants (see discussion in introduction). Other factors—namely occupation, age, his children's age, and his wife's name—suggest they were the same person.

⁷² TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 3004, Exp. 503316: 1937, Robo y Lesiones. Tapia claimed that, since he "chastised" Lara for his unwanted attentions on his wife, Lara "desde ese momento, tratara de perjudicar por cuantos medios [que] tuvo a su alcance, tanto al que habla como a su esposa." Lara stated that Tapia had formally accused him of groping his wife and daughter, who did not accuse Lara when brought to the Comisaría to give statements—unsurprisingly, given the difficulties involved in filing assault charges against police in their own station. Lara described Tapia's accusations as "mera represalia" directed against a simple gendarme upholding the law.

imposition of fines and upholding of regulations on vendors was practically from the start bound up in questions of interpersonal relationships between vendors and police. Indeed, Tapia was hardly the only vendor to face police harassment, fines, or arrests due to disputes with gendarmes ostensibly tasked with the dispassionate enforcement of laws and regulations.⁷³ Vendors' social relationships with gendarmes were vital to shaping the practical exercise of police power.

“Between a Sword and a Wall”: Alcohol, Extortion, and Protection

Nowhere was this clearer than with alcohol. Despite strict regulations on sales and drinking, and prohibitions on police imbibing while on duty, gendarmes often seemed more likely to break the law than to uphold it where alcohol was concerned. In part, this stemmed from gendarmes' enmeshment in broader social norms and practices. As historians like Diego Pulido Esteva have demonstrated, drinking was widely popular among all classes and crucial in reinforcing gender and class norms; it was especially important in the day-to-day construction of lower- and working-class masculine sociabilities. Drinking and its various rituals provided people with opportunities to solidify social ties and uphold gendered and classed notions of honor.⁷⁴ Despite growing discourse that framed alcohol as a threat to the individual and the

The case brought by Tapia (and his son) against the gendarmes apparently came to nothing. The judicial police investigation was fruitless. An undercover agent chatted up the accused gendarmes to see if they would admit to anything (they did not), and found two women who claimed to be witnesses but refused to give statements, saying it was a waste of time and that they would simply deny everything if forced to testify. The file was sent to a judge, who registered it. No further action is recorded in the file.

⁷³ After a gendarme accused the estanco owner Clara Zamudio of interfering in an arrest for fighting outside her shop, one of the accused fighters (and a friend of Zamudio) said that she had done no such thing, and that the accusation stemmed from enmity on the part of the gendarme (“pues ha notado que el gendarme de referencia tiene mala voluntad a su amiga ignorando que motivo tenga”). His statement obviously must be read with a grain (or heaping spoonful) of salt, but even if inaccurate it relied on common understandings of police corruption and arbitrariness as mediated through interpersonal friendships and enmities. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0064, Exp. 010738: 1901, Querrela de Longino García.

⁷⁴ Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, chaps. 5–6; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, chaps. 4–5. On the broader role of honor in nineteenth and early twentieth century Latin America, see: Sueann Caulfield, Sarah C. Chambers, and Lara

nation alike, drinking remained popular, including with many of the agents of state authority tasked with upholding regulations. Police, who were regularly accused of drinking on duty despite repeated regulations against it, unsurprisingly shared these cultural norms, shaping their relationship with alcohol vendors and other drinkers alike.⁷⁵

At times, this took the form of direct protection for alcohol vendors who violated regulations. Critical newspapers like *El Diario del Hogar* described how pulquería operators (and other comerciantes) formed ties with nearby police by offering free drinks or other goods; in return, the police would take the vendor's side when the latter double-charged customers or, one suspects, when vendors sold alcohol illegally after closing hours.⁷⁶ Such practices were widespread, and at times led to conflicts between police. In 1900, for instance, two mounted police on patrol at night in Colonia Santa Julia found that the shop Maripepa La Revoltosa was open far past the closing time set by the Tacuba municipal government. When they tried to impose a fine, a drunken employee of the Inspección General de Policía came out of the shop (where he had, presumably, been drinking) to intervene—first trying to keep the gendarmes away by waving around his identification and boasting of his position, then insulting them and demanding they leave, and finally offering them a drink. Although he failed and the shopkeeper

Putnam, eds., *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁷⁵ Rohlfes, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City," 109–10, 122–24; Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 44. It should be noted that police drinking was not limited to lower- and working-class gendarmes, but also was commonly denounced among police officials. See, for instance, the report on Comisario Herón Ruiz's drunken "formidable scandal" in a cantina in July of 1917. AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Secretaría del Gobierno, Comisaría de Policía, Caja 5, Exp. 290.

⁷⁶ "Compadrazgos [sic] con la policía," *El Diario del Hogar*, 2 July 1891, 1; "Otra vez la policía," *El Diario del Hogar*, 10 November 1891, 1; "Compadrazgos con la policía," *El Diario del Hogar*, 6 March 1892, 3; Rohlfes, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City," 137. It should be noted that, while Rohlfes quite reasonably links these practices of "compadrazgo" with tolerance for illegal sales, the articles cited (his sources) make no mention of illegal sales. Instead, *El Diario del Hogar* was much more concerned with vendors using their ties with the police to rip off customers—double-charging them through various tricks, or charging them with replacing broken glasses that were already broken when the vendor served the customer.

was fined, the incident suggests how police often sought to protect certain merchants, in part simply to allow themselves to partake of alcohol after normal hours.⁷⁷ The incident also highlights some of the limits of protection—while individual police might be convinced to look the other way, perhaps through the gift of a glass of pulque, their ability to offer protection against other police, in turn, was limited and especially complicated by jurisdictional conflicts.

However, while drinking may have been a crucial arena for the shaping of gendarmes' relationships with those around them, their status as gendarmes inevitably tinged their interactions with others. Although ordinary drinking certainly generated its own share of quotidian violence, usually in response to offended honor, police violence often operated in different ways.⁷⁸ In one telling incident from 1920, a group of four working-class women at the fonda El Chincharrazo were approached by two gendarmes, who asked them to drink with them. The women purchased three liters of pulque for the six of them to split, and as they drank, the gendarmes flirted rather heavy-handedly with the women. When the pulque ran out and the gendarmes asked for more, the women feigned that they had run out of money. At that, the gendarmes became annoyed, one saying (as one woman remembered) “in a half-serious half-joking tone, ‘well then, we’ll have to go to the Villa [e.g., take the women to the municipal jail of Guadalupe Hidalgo],’ making it understood as a threat.”⁷⁹ Matters quickly escalated into physical violence: two of the women were injured, and all four were arrested, alongside two male relatives of one of the women who had attempted to intervene (curiously, on the side of the gendarmes). They were all held for several days on trumped-up charges of offenses against the

⁷⁷ AHCM, Municipalidades, Azcapotzalco, Policía, Caja 7, Exp. 8.

⁷⁸ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, chaps. 4–5; Pulido Esteva, *¡A su salud!*, chap. 6.

⁷⁹ “en tono medio serio medio bromista: ‘pues que se me hace que vamos para la Villa,’ dando a entender una amenaza” (Testimony of Eva Rojo). TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1622, Exp. 290776: 1920, Ultrajes a la Policía.

police. Although the judge found the accusations baseless and soon freed them, as often happened the court took no steps to investigate the police.⁸⁰ Such cases were common, and suggest that gendarme's power to enact violence that would be little-questioned by other authorities, or to readily involve institutions like courts and jails in ostensibly interpersonal disputes, readily shaped their interactions with those around them.⁸¹

Moreover, changes in court records and other sources suggest a gradual shift over time in gendarmes' relationships with those, including drinkers, who violated wide-ranging public order regulations. Examining a sample of 200 court cases stemming from accusations of crimes by or against the police over 1878-1947, the proportion of such cases that featured accusations of the police committing extortion (of money, goods, or services) or simply stealing money or goods increased dramatically after the Revolution, and especially in the 1930s and 1940s (Table 4.2).⁸² During the Porfiriato, such accusations were relatively rare, as the vast majority of cases for crimes against or by police stemmed instead from disputes over the use of force or the proper

⁸⁰ Ibid. Unsurprisingly, the gendarmes denied having been drinking on duty. Despite differences in the women's testimony, all four agreed that the gendarmes had acted aggressively, and three coincided in that the gendarmes had become angry when the women refused to buy them another round of pulque. Despite the women's accusations, medical personnel did not examine whether the gendarmes had been drinking, and the court simply ordered the detainees freed after a cursory investigation that called no witnesses.

⁸¹ For another example where a demanded that a vendor provide him with alcohol, see: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2626, Exp. 545590: 1933, Abuso de Autoridad.

⁸² Given the relatively small sample size within each period, the percentages given in the table are not necessarily statistically representative. However, they do show a broader pattern that corresponds with the impression given in other types of sources. The majority of these cases are filed as either Abuse of Authority or one of several types of charges against the police—insults (*injurias*), injuries (*lesiones*), or offenses (*ultrajes a la policía*)—although a number fall under different types of cases. Limiting the case sample only to cases for Abuse of Authority leads to an increased proportion of cases with accusations of police theft or extortion, but also leads to significantly smaller sample sizes, hence why I have focused instead on the wider sample. It should also be noted that the 1878-1883 sample is significantly smaller than many of the rest due to differences in how pre- and post-1900 court records were catalogued, making it significantly more time-consuming to find specific types of cases pre-1900. Meanwhile, a larger proportion than usual of the 1913-1918 sample was made up of incomplete or partial files, leading me to read fewer cases in those years. Finally, changes in the AGN's document request system toward the end of my research period allowed me to request larger numbers of cases by the time I reached the 1930s and 1940s. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to follow through with tentative plans to return to the AGN to bring previous sample periods up to the same size. Finally, it should be noted that these cases only include cases about the police—for consistency, cases of crimes by or against other authorities are not included in the sample.

boundaries of police authority, as discussed in the previous chapter. In contrast, allegations of police theft and extortion were significantly more common by the 1930s and 1940s—especially in cases specifically related to Abuse of Authority, where they were present in 50.72% of the sixty-nine such cases from those decades.⁸³

Sample Period	1878-1883	1900-1905	1913-1918	1920-1925	1933-1938	1942-1947
Number of Cases Sampled	11	39	13	30	54	53
Number of Cases, Police Accused of Theft or Extortion	1	2	1	7	23	20
Percentage of Total Sample	09.09%	05.13%	07.69%	23.33%	42.59%	37.73%

Table 4.2: Allegations of Police Theft or Extortion in Cases of Crimes By or Against Police, 1878-1947.
SOURCE: TSJDF, S.XIX and S.XX.

The majority of these allegations stemmed from arrests for public order offenses (many of which came after visits to pulquerías, nightclubs, or other drinking establishments). Most commonly, people who had been drinking were stopped by the police for public drunkenness, public urination, or public sexual offenses—although a handful were stopped for weapons checks—and police threatened to bring them to the nearest Comisaría, where they would have to pay a fine, unless they arranged to pay a smaller bribe (the *mordida* or “bite”) directly to the police for their freedom. Such instances took advantage of both material deprivation (especially the lack of public restrooms, or private spaces for lower- and working-class couples) and the subjectivity of charges like public disorder, which were substantially based on police discretion,

⁸³ It should be noted that this does not include other allegations of favoritism (which may well have been purchased through extortion), as it is limited to direct allegations of extortion. For example, the record does not count one case from 1946 in which a gendarme was accused of allowing suspects he was driving to escape, because he was never directly accused of having been paid off by them (although the fact that he returned to the station drunk after their escape would seem to suggest that he may have been bribed with cash or alcohol). TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3817, Exp. 673831: 1946, Delito Oficial.

and it was common for those so accused to contest the charges.⁸⁴ It is difficult to tell with precision from the case sample exactly who was most likely to be targeted for such offenses. Although sources suggest that the urban working and lower classes were the most vulnerable to such police intervention, and a large number of those so targeted were artisans, factory workers, or low-level municipal employees, the middle and even professional classes were not necessarily immune.⁸⁵ The latter groups, along with municipal employees who may have had relatively low incomes but who probably counted on connections with authorities, appear to have been rather more likely than less well-connected or less wealthy individuals to file charges for abuse of authority after extortion attempts.⁸⁶ Although petitions, internal reports, and other documents make it clear that police had long engaged in similar practices, what the changes in the court records suggest is that the tenor of police-civilian relationships shifted over time.⁸⁷ Gaining the

⁸⁴ For example, after a young working-class couple (he a ferrocarrilero, and she a costurera) were accused by a gendarme of *faltas a la moral pública*—the gendarme believed that they were engaged in public sexual intercourse, although he admitted that he was not entirely sure—they effectively denied the charges; in fact, the costurera went so far as to demand a gynecological exam to prove her virginity (the ferrocarrilero was also examined). Notably, they claimed that, while arresting them, the gendarme had informed them that they would have to pay a steep 50-peso fine in the Delegación offices. After a cousin of theirs reportedly arranged to free them in return for a 1-peso bribe, which was obtained with the help of other family members and friends, the gendarme changed his mind and instead demanded 25 pesos. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3577, Exp. 643755: 1944, Abuso de Autoridad y Cohecho.

⁸⁵ Those who alleged police theft or bribery in the 1940s included a range of obreros (and obreras), carpinteros, comerciantes, macheteros, albañiles, zapateros, and choferes (from bus lines, transportation companies, and municipal offices). They also included José Cabrera Ortíz, a well-off veterinarian who was said to take care of the most prominent horse stables in the Federal District (and who was well-connected enough to have been in possession of a pistol given to a friend as a gift from Gabriel Ávila Camacho, brother to the President); the lawyer Cirilio Refugio Luna, who was arrested after leaving an elegant nightclub on the Paseo de la Reforma, and who reportedly argued with police when they refused to bring him to the prosecutor's offices in the Seventh Demarcación, where he said he had high-placed friends; and the traveling business agent Raul Sánchez Celis, who was reportedly extorted and robbed by police and a Cabaret Inspector and who was said to have bragged that he was the son of an influential general. The cases are, respectively: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3831, Exp. 675903: 1946, Abuso de Autoridad, Robo, Lesiones; *Ibid.*, Caja 3562, Exp. 641742: 1944, Contra Agentes de Autoridad, Cohecho, Abuso de Autoridad, Lesiones y Robo; *Ibid.*, Caja 3969, Exp. 696065: 1947, Abuso de Autoridad, Robo.

⁸⁶ On the relative overrepresentation of higher-status victims in charges of abuse of authority in the 1920s, see: Pulido Esteva, "Los negocios de la policía," 18–19.

⁸⁷ On Porfirian antecedents, see: Rohlfs, "Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City," 126–40; Pulido Esteva, "Trabajo, clase y prácticas policiales en las comisarias de la ciudad de México, 1870-1920," 699–706.

police discretion necessary to avoid becoming ensnared by expansive public order regulations became ever-more dominated by acts of extortion that residents increasingly denounced as predatory. Gendarmes' relations with the broader population became more often mediated through illicit financial transactions, increasingly moving away from the more varied forms that had characterized earlier ties between police and policed.

Police extortion of vendors, especially those who illegally sold alcohol, took a similar shape to this general pattern, albeit with a crucial difference. If the exact reasons why police offered protection to comerciantes often went unstated in earlier cases, such as many of those discussed above, court records (and other sources) suggest the growing prevalence of extortion and police violence as crucial factors in structuring gendarme's relations with vendors, especially by the 1930s and 1940s.⁸⁸ Indeed, as a proportion of the overall sample, accusations by comerciantes of police extortion increased dramatically in the 1930s; while extortion had clearly been an element of earlier relations between vendors and police, it is clear that the scope and scale of extortion expanded dramatically as police increasingly began to demand bribes in return for tolerance.⁸⁹ However, there was a crucial difference between vendors and those who were

⁸⁸ The change over time is perhaps most obvious in how journalists discussed police corruption. If, during the Porfiriato, journalists often claimed that corner gendarmes formed bonds of friendship with favored vendors (who plied them with drinks), by the early 1940s journalists more often claimed that police favor was directly purchased through willingness to pay frequent bribes. "Asuntos del día," *El Diario del Hogar*, 14 May 1885; "Plumadas," *El Diario del Hogar*, 30 July 1885; Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, "Fue, es, y será – Algo más sobre el servicio de policía," *El Gráfico*, 26 March 1942.

⁸⁹ Of the 36 cases of abuse of authority by police in the 1933-1938 sample, seven—some 19.44%—included allegations of police extorting vendors or vendors bribing police in return for toleration. Although such cases remained a definite minority in the 1933-1938 sample, they were nonetheless a prominent minority, especially because many of the cases present enough similarities as to discuss them as a more-or-less cohesive group. Earlier sample periods included no more than a small handful of such cases, with few specific similarities between them, indicating a much less regularized, more individualized system of extortion and protection (at least for the types of cases that were denounced in court).

This impression is bolstered by the growing scope of petitions accusing police of corruption and extortion of vendors. See, for instance: AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 1405, Exp. Q/021/1168: Letter from members of the Unión de Veteranos de la Revolución, 20 April 1936 (denounces "EXTORSIONES AL COMERCIO a cambio de infracciones de Reglamento" and "TOLERANCIA DE PUESTOS en las Banquetas de las Principales Calles

detained for public order offenses. The latter had far less quotidian contact with individual police, and often experienced police extortion as a simple act of predation, while vendors continued to have regular contact with police whose actions shaped their livelihoods. For vendors, extortion was simply one more element in their constant negotiations with police to generate the protection and favors necessary to survive repressive regulations.

Despite these continuities, there appears to have been a change in scope and scale of extortion—and in the degree to which it became judicialized—in the post-revolutionary years, especially from the 1930s onward. Several intersecting factors undoubtedly contributed to this shift, which likely reflected both a real expansion in extortion and an increased willingness on the part of vendors to accuse corrupt police in court. First, the Great Depression brought with it an economic slump. Unemployment undoubtedly pushed many into vending, which, in the 1930s as previously, continued to be a crucial site for subsistence.⁹⁰ The economic turmoil of the era also raised the stakes of regulatory enforcement, perhaps making those involved more likely to take matters to court. Second, as discussed earlier in the chapter, the early 1930s were marked by an intensification of efforts to regulate street vending, while alcohol vending was particularly shaped by the cumulative effects of a growing number of regulations and postrevolutionary anti-

..... donde los Gendarmes recaudan más que los Colectores del Departamento Central,” [all-capitals in original]; Ibid., Manuel Ávila Camacho, Caja 1125, Exp. 703.4/88: Letter from Mariano Ortiz Jiménez, 21 April 1942 (complains that police in the city center exploit regulations to keep sidewalks clear and “estafa a los citados comerciantes”); Ibid., Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 402, Exp. 444.94/21: Letter from A. Trigos, undated (denounces in detail large-scale police extortion of vendors).

⁹⁰ On the Great Depression in Mexico (albeit from more of an institutional than a social perspective), see: Alan Knight, “The Character and Consequences of the Great Depression in Mexico,” in *The Great Depression in Latin America*, ed. Paulo Drinot and Alan Knight (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 213–45.

Why vendors turned to illegal alcohol sales was rarely mentioned in court; many simply admitted it without justification. In a rare counterexample from 1934, María Guadalupe Arroyo Flores explained that she was the mother of numerous young children, and that her husband had been without work for a long stretch of time (likely due to the effects of the Great Depression). As her home-based grocery store produced little profit, she turned to illegal alcohol sales to provide for her family. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2749, Exp. 580990: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad. Vendors had long made such claims in their petitions to authorities; see: Porter, ““And That It Is Custom Makes It Law.””

alcohol campaigns. Between regulatory efforts and the general economic turmoil of the Great Depression, the number of licensed alcohol vendors and drinking establishments in the Federal District declined from the late 1920s into the mid-1930s (see Table 4.3). Street vendors, selling illegally and with police protection, seem to have increasingly moved into the hollowed-out alcohol market, meeting continuing consumer demand and turning a profit in the process. Finally, third, the police force itself underwent serious changes. As discussed in Chapter Two, postrevolutionary police reforms increasingly made an impact on policing by the 1930s. Police increasingly spent longer on the force, fostering the creation of longer-running protection rackets; they were increasingly likely to identify more strongly with the interests of their coworkers, subtly reshaping their relations with the broader population; and systematic extortion became increasingly central to how police operated and were organized.

Year	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
Drinking Establishments	4,588	4,711	3,505	3,599	2,891	3,311	3,061	3,965	2,979	2,609

Table 4.3: Number of Licensed Drinking Establishments in the Federal District, 1927-1936.

SOURCE: Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón, José Gómez Robleda, and Benjamín Argüelles Martínez, *Tendencia y ritmo de la criminalidad en México, D.F.* (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Estadísticas, 1939), 67.

By the 1930s, court records show that many comerciantes—not just street vendors, but also shopkeepers, pulquería owners, market stall operators, and the like—were enmeshed in networks of normalized police extortion and protection that extended from lowly gendarmes up through the police hierarchy. These networks were particularly well-established in heavily-trafficked areas around markets, major intersections, and plazas. Notably, most court records about police extortion of vendors stemmed not from police extortion itself—that is, from vendors charging police for extorting them—but from unwanted disruptions in established networks of

extortion and protection.⁹¹ Indeed, many court accusations by vendors of police misconduct suggest that they paid bribes regularly and over an extended period to the same police, most often gendarmes stationed on the street. While many only said that they had paid bribes “with frequency” or otherwise indicated that such payments had been going on for some time, others were more specific.⁹² One pulque vendor in Gustavo A. Madero claimed that he had been bribing the corner gendarme for about a month; similarly, one man who claimed to have been hired by a gendarme to collect bribes from vendors near the Zócalo said he had been doing it for three weeks, although the gendarme himself had likely done so for longer.⁹³ Other cases indicated far longer timeframes. In one file from 1937, Adela Allón Quintero, the owner of a coffee stall on the well-trafficked intersection of Valle Gómez street and the Calzada de Guadalupe on the north side of the city, claimed that she had been paying bribes to the same corner police—Gendarme 603, Miguel Gaytan—for five years, ever since she first set up her stall. Moreover, she said, there were about thirty other coffee stall operators on the corner, who all also paid bribes to the same gendarme. Two of them testified in the case, one saying she had paid for five years and another saying he had been paying for two, ever since he opened his stand.⁹⁴

As the latter case suggests, gendarmes assigned to areas with many vendors stood to collect a pretty penny (or rather, a pretty peso) through extortion. All three vendors who testified said that they paid Gaytan according to a standardized fee schedule: twenty-five centavos on

⁹¹ In very few cases did vendors claim to have simply refused to pay bribes. For one such example, see: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad and Cohecho.

⁹² One shopkeeper in 1934 said she had illegally sold alcohol “contando con la lenidad de las autoridades encargadas de la vigilancia, a quienes con frecuencia les ha pagado algo”. See: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2749, Exp. 580990: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad.

⁹³ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2620, Exp. 554485: Contra un Agente de la Autoridad, Abuso de Autoridad (1933); TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3039, Exp. 521205: Abuso de Autoridad (1937).

⁹⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho.

weekdays, fifty centavos on Saturdays, and one peso on Sundays. Assuming that there were thirty stalls on the corner who all paid the same bribes, as the vendors alleged, Gaytan would have collected 82.50 pesos per week—nearly as much as much as he earned per month from his official salary. And he was probably doing the same to other vendors nearby: the case file included an article from *El Universal Gráfico* accusing him of extorting merchants at the nearby Beethoven Market in Peralvillo in 1935.⁹⁵ Similar fees were collected elsewhere in the city, whether for tolerance of illegal alcohol sales or as simple protection money (or *derecho de piso*). In 1937, several stalls on and around the south side of the Zócalo reportedly paid 25 centavos per weekday to gendarme J. Jesús Rivas González, who purportedly collected two to three pesos in total each weekday, eight to ten each Saturday, and an unknown but certainly higher amount on Sundays.⁹⁶ Fees appear to have increased by the 1940s; one detailed denunciation complained that one gendarme was collecting hundreds of pesos per week charging illegal pulque vendors anywhere from fifteen to thirty pesos per week.⁹⁷

Yet gendarmes like Gaytan or Rivas only received a small cut of the cash passing through their hands. Police corruption extended upward into the departmental hierarchy, and low-level extortion was connected to higher-level corruption like never before. During the Porfiriato,

⁹⁵ The thirty stalls combined would have paid a total of 7.5 pesos per weekday, 15 on Saturdays, and 30 on Sundays. Gaytan claimed to make 94 pesos per month, or a little over three pesos per day—a typical police salary for the era. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho.

⁹⁶ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3039, Exp. 521205: Appeal, Abuso de Autoridad. These bribes appear to have been for simple extralegal *derecho de piso*, and apparently had nothing to do with alcohol. The case in question is suspect. Rivas argued that the charges were merely a pretext to fire him. Not a single vendor testified against him, and many signed a letter in his support, although that does not rule out the possibility that he had been coercing him. Undiscussed in the court record was the oddity that Rivas had purportedly hired a man to collect the bribes with him. While higher police officials did often collect bribes through hired hands, street-level gendarmes in other cases always collected them in person. That Rivas would have hired an assistant to go with him to collect bribes in a relatively small area seems unusual, especially given that he supposedly told Judicial Police that he turned to extortion due to the material difficulty of providing for his large family on his meager salary.

⁹⁷ AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 402, Exp. 444.94/21: Letter from A. Trigos, undated.

police comisarios had regularly collected all manner of illicit fees from gendarmes—whether by pocketing fines for disciplinary infractions, or accepting mandatory “gifts” of gendarmes’ daily wages on saints’ days—such that, as one historian has argued, gendarmes found low-level corruption practically a necessity to make up for their lost wages.⁹⁸ Yet postrevolutionary police officials from the 1920s onward further regularized corruption through vertical organization, better securing their own cut of the illicit gains from street-level corruption.⁹⁹ Newspapers and petitions alleged that police officials expected their underlings to funnel extorted funds upward into their pockets. Officials sold posts on well-trafficked street corners to the highest bidder, and removed police who underperformed from profitable patrol routes. In the process, according to the denunciations of journalists and whistle-blowers alike, corrupt officials fueled competition that made low-level extortion and bribe-paying all but impossible to eradicate.¹⁰⁰ “Far from dedicating ourselves to service,” stated one petition ostensibly in the name of over two hundred gendarmes from the early 1940s, “we instead dedicate ourselves to robbing and mugging to satisfy the hunger for money that those men [e.g., police officials] have.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Rohlfes, “Police and Penal Correction in Mexico City,” 126–29, 131.

⁹⁹ Diego Pulido Esteva has convincingly traced the 1920s as a crucial decade in the systematization of “formas profanas” of organizing policing, including the charging of set fees for hiring and promotion. Pulido Esteva, “Los negocios de la policía,” 10.

¹⁰⁰ For several detailed articles from the early 1940s, see: “El dedo en la llaga,” *Excelsior*, 25 April 1940; “Las relevaciones del Policía 529 serán motivo de investigación,” *La Prensa*, 25 April 1940; Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, “Fue, es, y será – Algo más sobre el servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 26 March 1942; Enrique Basulto Jaramillo, “Fue, es, y será – Aspectos fundamentales del problema policíaco,” *El Gráfico*, 26 November 1942. Similarly, a denunciatory letter from 1935 complained that discontent on the police force was largely due to the corruption of officials, who demanded that gendarmes pay a fee of 100 pesos in order to be hired, only to fire them two months later in order to similarly rip off the next aspiring gendarme. AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 1405, Exp. Q/021/1168: Letter from Antonio Suárez Treviño, 26 August 1935.

¹⁰¹ AGN, Manual Ávila Camacho, Caja 1125, Exp. 703.4/88: Undated letter from Juan Perusquia to the president. “lejos de dedicarnos al servicio nos dedicamos a robar y asaltar para satisfacer el hambre de dinero que tienen estos señores.”

Moreover, beyond collecting fees from gendarmes (who in turn extorted comerciantes), higher police officials also themselves extorted vendors more directly, at times using subordinates as go-betweens. In 1935, for instance, a Judicial Police investigation found six vendors in the area near Mercado de la Merced who, upon being found selling pulque illegally on a Sunday, all claimed that they had purchased “authorization” from the Commandant of the Second Company of foot police by sending him fees collected through a mediator known as El Chaparro.¹⁰² That same year, the President’s office received a letter purportedly written in the name of 400 gendarmes demanding reforms to combat corruption in the First and Second Companies. Among other complaints, they claimed that officials threatened shopkeepers in the area with the closure of their shops if they failed to pay bribes to men the police officials had commissioned to collect illicit fees.¹⁰³ Whether they collected fees directly from vendors or indirectly through gendarmes, the police hierarchy (and, through them, undoubtedly higher officials) was thoroughly implicated in the protection market.¹⁰⁴ Given what appears to have been growing pressure on gendarmes—and, through them, vendors—from above in the police hierarchy, it is tempting to interpret police corruption around vending as a top-down phenomenon. However, to do so misses not just the pressures from below, as vendors struggled

¹⁰² TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2859, Exp. 465397: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad.

¹⁰³ AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 357, Exp. 417/13: Undated letter, with note of receipt and processing on 20 June 1935.

¹⁰⁴ Denunciatory letters to the president regularly complained of the corruption of police officials. The former police Cabo Aurelio Rodríguez Franco requested re-employment in the police after he was, he claimed, falsely blamed for the extortion of clothing vendors and a fonda owner, which was actually done by another officer on behalf of the company commander. AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 358, Exp. 417.1/7: Letter of 2 September 1937. One letter to Miguel Alemán Valdés claimed that Comandante Juan Chávez Pérez collected hundreds of pesos per week through gendarme 2307, who charged a range of legal and illegal businesses. The letter noted as proof that Chávez’s fancy home would be entirely out of reach on just a police comandante’s income. AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 402, Exp. 444.94/21: Letter from A. Trigos, undated.

to gain police favor and protection, but also downplays the crucial role that gendarmes themselves played as intermediaries.

For the most part, protection rackets around alcohol sales were most thoroughly developed among ordinary gendarmes (and their superior officers) in the Preventive Police rather than Judicial Police or the Servicio Secreto. This undoubtedly stemmed from differences between the different forces in how they policed regulatory infractions. As discussed earlier, gendarmes were among the chief authorities tasked with enforcing regulations in the areas they regularly patrolled. In contrast, Judicial Police and Servicio Secreto agents, who more often crisscrossed the city in criminal investigations or on special commissions, came into less regular contact with vendors, who at times were unsure that the plainclothes officers were actually even police.¹⁰⁵ However, this did not necessarily prevent such police from extorting vendors, especially on a more immediate basis.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, some cases suggest conflicts between Judicial and Preventive Police over control of resources extorted from vendors, although often in such

¹⁰⁵ In 1935, for instance, Judicial Police agent Rodolfo Cárdenas Gómez's attempt to carry out an arrest warrant was stridently resisted by several neighbors and passersby who refused to believe that he was a plainclothes agent (according to them, in large part because Cárdenas refused to properly identify himself) As one put it, a badge "no basta para su identificación pues es grande el número de individuos que han sorprendido la buena fe de las personas haciéndose pasar como agentes de policía". TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2866, Exp. 466023: Appeal, 1936, Resistencia de un Particular, Evasión de Preso, Injurias.

¹⁰⁶ For example, in 1921, the Policía Reservada agent Ricardo Tello y Valle attempted to fine María Serrato Domínguez for illegally selling pulque from an eatery in the front room of her home. According to witnesses, he did so after himself drinking pulque there with friends. Serrato's nephew further claimed that Tello attempted to extort Serrato, although she herself made no such claim, perhaps because she wanted to avoid further trouble. In any case, she refused to pay the fine (or bribe) and grabbed Tello's badge. Once in the Comisaría, she claimed that she had been repeatedly scammed by imposter police, and that she had wanted confirmation from other authorities that Tello was in fact an actual agent. The judge evidently could not fault her reasoning, and Serrato was released soon after. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 1632, Exp. 291880: 1921, Ultrajes a la Policía.

Serrato's concerns were well-founded: after the Revolution, concerns grew over the increasing appearance of fake badges and police equipment, or real materials illicitly procured with the help of corrupt police, for the purpose of extortion. See, for example: "Los policías privados no podrán usar las placas oficiales," *El Nacional*, 1 November 1930, Second Section, 1; "Entre risas y lagrimas," *El Nacional*, 15 March 1946, Second Section, 4. In 1925, an Inspector found that an official in the First Comisaría had given his booklet for levying regulatory infractions to a former police agent turned pulquero, who was regularly "fining" his competitors: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección de Policía, Archivo Correspondencia y Depósito, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 94.

cases, the waters were muddied by the frequency with which accusations of tolerating illegal alcohol sales were used as tools in wider conflicts between different police departments.¹⁰⁷

Above all, vendors most frequently brought corrupt police to court not due to extortion per se, but more often due to unagreed-to changes in their arrangements. Much as scholars of contemporary drug trafficking have found, violence was often the result of the breakdown of protection rackets.¹⁰⁸ What finally broke the five-year-long protection racket between coffee stall operator Adela Allón Quintero and gendarme Miguel Gaytan was that the latter abruptly demanded that the vendor sell him her stand for less than half the price she considered fair. When she refused, she said, he turned to harassment, culminating in an incident when he pulled her from her stand, beat her, and arrested her after a minor dispute about whether she had already paid part of the nightly bribe to Gaytan's partner.¹⁰⁹ Ernesto Rangel Ibel, a pulquería worker in Guadalupe Hidalgo, claimed that he had been paying off gendarme Emilio Jiménez Reyes for over a month, bribing him with \$1.50 every Saturday as well as regular glasses of pulque in return for letting him sell pulque at night from a keg outside the pulquería. Their arrangement lasted until one night that Jiménez, instead of taking the usual glass, demanded that he be given the entire keg and insulted Rangel, breaking their typical arrangement and leading to a brawl

¹⁰⁷ In one 1931 incident, two agents with the Comisiones de Seguridad accused Preventive Police of illegally detaining them without charges after a nighttime dispute with a gendarme in the streets east of the Zócalo. They claimed that the gendarme had not only failed to break up a fight (the original reason for their dispute, they said), but also that he had been allowing illegal alcohol sales in a nearby puesto. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2644, Exp. 548813: 1931/1933, Privación de Libertad y Abuso de Autoridad.

Similarly, in a case that will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter, preventive police arrested Judicial Police who were accused of extorting vendors near Mercado de la Merced. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2859, Exp. 465397: 1935/1936, Abuso de Autoridad.

¹⁰⁸ See: Richard Snyder and Angelica Durán-Martínez, "Does Illegality Breed Violence? Drug Trafficking and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52, no. 3 (2009): 253–73.

¹⁰⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho, and Lesiones.

between the two several days later.¹¹⁰ Other cases seem to have stemmed from failed efforts to set up longer-lasting arrangements. María Guadalupe Arroyo noted that she had been paying off a variety of police to allow her to illegally sell alcohol on days when it was not permitted. On 16 September 1934 she had given two pesos to pay off gendarme Miguel Arévalo Cadena, who had been specially commissioned to root out illegal alcohol sales. Despite her earlier payment, he fined her on 23 September, provoking a “scandal” in her small shop and leading gendarmes stationed on the corner to intervene.¹¹¹ Cases such as these, and the fact that so many such incidents only entered court records in such circumstances, not only suggest that most incidents of police extortion never were discussed in court records—quiet extortion rings with few disputes likely generated few complaints to the judiciary—but also suggest that vendors’ interpersonal relationships with gendarmes continued to play an important role in shaping protection rackets, even while these relationships themselves were shaped by the growing regularization of protection rackets.

As the incidents mentioned above suggest, violence played a crucial, structural part in police protection. For vendors—especially street vendors, but to a lesser degree small shopkeepers and bar owners as well—routinized police corruption was a double-edged blade, perhaps as likely to expose them to violence and harassment as it was to offer them protection. Although the case sample is too small for effective quantitative analysis, cases suggest that stall owners, the operators of small shops, and street vendors were particularly subject to police violence.¹¹² At times, violence took on clearly gendered dimensions. In the case of the coffee

¹¹⁰ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2620, Exp. 554485: 1933, Contra un Agente de Autoridad and Abuso de Autoridad.

¹¹¹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2749, Exp. 580990: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad.

¹¹² Police violence could also be directed against vendors’ families. Leonardo Maldonado Osorio, a coffee stall operator, testified that gendarme Miguel Gaytan had beaten his wife and then attacked him when he intervened. He

stall operator Adela Ayón Quintero, mentioned above, other vendors mentioned that the gendarme Miguel Gaytan had bragged that he had arrested her because she believed herself to be better than him.¹¹³ Similarly, when the coffee vendor María Galván Arriaga was arrested one night by the gendarme Javier Villaseñor Pelayo for illegal alcohol sales—which she claimed was part of a long-running effort on his part to extort her—she alleged that he refused to let her inform her family and tried to forcibly take her down a dark street. When she refused, he mocked her, telling her that she was not too honorable to walk with him in such places—both a challenge to her propriety, and an implicit threat of sexual violence.¹¹⁴ Besides these initial threats, Galván was soon forced to abandon her coffee stall and stopped leaving her home at night after she was warned that the police planned on “stabbing her in the back” in reprisal for her accusations. Indeed, one of her witnesses, an employee of hers, abruptly changed his testimony to favor the police after what Galván claimed was police intimidation.¹¹⁵ Police violence—whether carried out by individual gendarmes, or with the complicity of a broader web of police officials—was vital in maintaining the steady flow of bribes necessary to keep protection rackets in operation.

Moreover, the threat of violence and coercion inevitably hung over all relations between police and vendors, even in instances of purported protection. One case from 1935 offers a telling example, while also highlighting how the plurality of officials assigned to enforce

had then been brought to the Comisaría, where Gaytan beat him with full knowledge of other station officials. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho, and Lesiones.

¹¹³ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2968, Exp. 499236: 1937, Abuso de Autoridad, Cohecho, and Lesiones. Gaytan denied the charges and argued that Allón was “sumamente altanera” with police and clients alike, saying she regularly fought customers in bill disputes. Although the judge ordered the investigation to proceed, Gaytan appealed, and the higher court ruled there was insufficient evidence to try him.

¹¹⁴ Galván said that Villaseñor “la estrujó en forma brutal queriendo llevársela por las calles de Alhóndiga que son bastantes oscuras a lo que ella se rehusó pero el Policía la injurió diciéndole que ni que fuera tan honrada para no querer ir con él por aquellas calles”. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad and Cohecho.

¹¹⁵ Galván reported hearing that the police “le iba a dar una puñalada por detras”. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad and Cohecho.

regulations led to frictions. The morning of 7 July 1935, the Judicial Police agents Rodolfo Cárdenas Gómez and Eduwigis Sosa Alvarado, who had been commissioned to check alcohol vendor's licenses, were brought to the Second Delegación on the orders of police Comandante Carlos González Valle, who claimed to have received news that they had extorted a liquor store owner near Mercado de la Merced.¹¹⁶ The resulting case was convoluted: the Judicial Police themselves accused González of abuse of authority, and implied that he was using the charges against them to prevent them from levying fines against vendors that he was extorting in return for protection.¹¹⁷ However, the most telling part of the case is the behavior of Eliseo Díaz de León, the liquor store owner who Cárdenas and Sosa purportedly extorted. Much to the evident frustration of police and Delegación officials, Díaz repeatedly changed his testimony. Although González claimed that Díaz had called him to report the extortion, Díaz denied having done so, saying instead that he had simply gone to the station to pay a fine for selling alcohol on Sundays without the proper license. Brought before the Judicial Police agents, González, and the prosecutor, Díaz denied having been extorted and claimed not to recognize Cárdenas and Sosa. Moments later, in an informal statement made only before González and the prosecutor after the Judicial Police left, Díaz changed his tune, instead claiming that they had in fact extorted him. However, when the prosecutor went to officially file his statement away from González, the liquor vendor again denied having been extorted. As Díaz explained to the apparently flummoxed prosecutor, "he found himself between a sword and a wall and was only trying to

¹¹⁶ The following description comes from: TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2859, Exp. 465397: 1935/1936, Abuso de Autoridad.

¹¹⁷ Cárdenas and Sosa did not outright say this, but the implication is clear in their claims. A later Judicial Police investigation carried out for the case turned up several vendors who claimed González collected payments to tolerate illegal weekend alcohol sales, as well as other accusations that the Comandante stole property from people who were arrested in his zone.

avoid future harm.”¹¹⁸ Whether he succeeded is unclear from the file. But Díaz’s evident discomfort is clear, as are the reasons for it. In a conflict between Judicial and Preventive Police, vendors like Díaz had everything to lose, as whichever party they testified against could enact reprisals against them. Police efforts to maintain protection rackets against interlopers from other institutions could offer vendors a measure of protection, but this protection was often incidental to the illicit profits of the police and could only go so far for vendors.

Nonetheless, vendors did continue to receive protection and favor in the 1930s, that at times went beyond simply paying the police to ignore regulatory infractions. Violence was not always employed in such protection, which could be as simple as using one police to check the abuses of other police through the calling in of favors or other such methods, and did not necessarily even entail the paying of bribes.¹¹⁹ However, the threat of police intervention or extralegal force remained crucial components in police protection, especially when turned against other officials or against competitors.

Much protection, whether purchased outright, generated by interpersonal networks of reciprocity, or some combination of the two, was directed against the actions of the growing bureaucracy of health inspectors and tax collectors who increasingly came to exercise power over spaces and people previously regulated mostly by the police, at times forming their own

¹¹⁸ According to the Agente del Ministerio Público, Díaz “manifestó que se encontraba entre la espada y la pared y trataba solo de evitarse futuros perjuicios”.

¹¹⁹ When the coffee stand operator María Galván Arriaga was brought to the Second Delegación on charges of illegal alcohol sales in 1935—charges she said were motivated by her refusal to pay bribes—she was quickly freed after calling an official in the First Delegación. Several police said that Galván had some sort of relationship with an employee in the latter office, which she used (they implied) to insulate herself from police interference in her business. But Galván’s protection was clearly limited: not only had she been harassed by a gendarme for a year, but her relationship did little to keep police from intimidating one of her witnesses into changing his testimony. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad and Cohecho.

alliances with vendors.¹²⁰ By the 1940s, relations between police and other authorities appear to have become rather smoother—in the court record sample, there was a conspicuous absence of cases of Preventive Police and other authorities (or Judicial Police) struggling for jurisdiction and control of protection rackets in that decade, and several cases suggest gendarmes regularly worked closely with the special Inspectors assigned to keep order in nightclubs, at times in order to extort customers.¹²¹ But during the 1930s, these relations were clearly still being worked out, given the number of cases driven by conflicts between authorities. To some extent, police protection of vendors against these actors may have been an attempt to re-assert police authority that was challenged by the expanding state's other offices, which, like the police, were also regularly implicated in corruption.¹²² In 1937, for instance, Sanitary Inspector Rodolfo Bojorquez Moreno accused gendarme Tomás Ortiz Hernández of having impeded the levying of a fine against a tortillería run by Ortiz's wife near Merced Market. While Bojorquez claimed that

¹²⁰ In October 1934, gendarme Miguel Mendoza Villar arrested a group of Agentes Sanitarios who were forcefully pulling street workers and homeless people (including at least one man who was likely a street vendor) into a truck in the lower-class neighborhood of Candelaria. The incident clearly points to tensions between police and other institutions tasked with regulating public spaces. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2739, Exp. 579149: 1934, Abuso de Autoridad and Lesiones.

On vendors' relations with other authorities: in 1935, María Galván Arriaga claimed that she had been warned of police threats against her by the local tax collector (as well as a military officer). TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 2843, Exp. 463083: 1935, Abuso de Autoridad and Cohecho.

¹²¹ See, for example: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3691, Exp. 657743: 1945, Abuso de Autoridad (in which police and an Inspector de Cabaret were accused of threatening two would-be cabaret goers), and *Ibid.*, Caja 3969, Exp. 696065: 1947, Abuso de Autoridad and Robo (in which police and an Inspector de Cabaret were said to have removed a man from a nightclub, demanded a bribe, and stolen 100 pesos, a set of pens, and a pair of glasses from him).

¹²² Complaints of corruption in other institutions were common. One letter to Lázaro Cárdenas complained of pulquerías that had purchased impunity from the city government's Departamento de Infracciones as well as the police. AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 352, Exp. 410/13: Notice/extract of letter of 25 December 1934. In one petition to Manuel Ávila Camacho, thirteen "comerciantes en pequeño" in Colonia Guerrero denounced Felipe C. Díaz de los Ramos for illegally possessing credentials from both the city government and the Departamento de Salubridad, and using them to extort vendors. *Ibid.*, Manuel Ávila Camacho, Caja 1125, Exp. 703.4/88: Letter of 18 June 1942. After a tense public meeting where the Jefe de Policía accused Servicio Secreto agents of corruption, including denouncing one agent for reportedly operating a chain of butcher's shops on the side, an agent announced what he saw as an important correction: he had only been running one butcher's shop, he said, and he had been forced to close it when city officials demanded an extravagant 600-peso bribe. "Filípica del Jefe de la Policía contra el imperio de la mordida," *La Prensa*, 28 September 1940.

Ortiz had drunkenly slapped and insulted him when he filed the infraction, Ortiz denied the charges and claimed it was unjust to fine the tortillería for the regulatory violation—even though the specific violation, that prices were not clearly displayed, was indeed contrary to regulations.¹²³ He further accused Bojorquez of having drunkenly demanded a two-peso bribe in return for not levying the fine, and complained that Bojorquez had spurned his own attempts to appeal to “comradeship” (*compañerismo*) between the Inspector and the police to talk him out of filing the infraction. Ortiz was further able to call several witnesses, including a customer who had reportedly overheard the exchange (who was himself a comerciante in the area), and a neighboring tortillera who said that Bojorquez had also extorted her on similar charges; both likely would have known Ortiz from other interactions. For his part, Bojorquez also called on additional witnesses—other Federal District employees who had accompanied him on a second attempt to levy the fine—who claimed that Ortiz had loudly insulted the Sanitary Inspector. Ultimately, the case proved inconclusive and petered out with no arrests.¹²⁴ As the case suggests, police protection did not necessarily entail bribery, but could stem from other factors including familial bonds between police and vendors. Not only did Ortiz act to protect his wife’s business, but he may well have been on good terms with the vendors who testified in his favor—although there certainly may have been other inducements for their testimony, such as not wanting to arouse the ire of a nearby gendarme.

Much of the time, police protection for vendors often entailed the participation of a much broader web of officials than just the gendarmes on the street, as exemplified by the case of José

¹²³ See, for instance, the 1931 “Reglamento para Molinos de Nixtamal, Expendios de Masa y Tortillerías en el Distrito Federal” in: *Diario Oficial*, 27 March 1931, Segunda Sección, pp. 15-16.

¹²⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3026, Exp. 500559: Denuncia hechos. Based on some unusually specific claims in the statement of one of Ortiz’s witnesses, it is possible that Ortiz coached him on what to say.

María Ortiz Páramo mentioned in the introduction. As discussed, Ortiz, a tax collector with the DDF's Oficina de Mercados, had approached a female pozole and pancita vendor near Mercado de la Merced to demand payment of her fees, only to be insulted by the vendor, unexpectedly arrested by the gendarme he asked to intervene on his behalf, and subjected to a series of humiliations by police officials. It seems likely that Ortiz had not been quite the simple victim he portrayed himself as. Not only was he accused at one point of breaking plates in the vendor's stall (although lack of testimony in the file makes this unclear), but he himself admitted that he was carrying a pistol and had invited a purported acquaintance, Andrés Martínez Quiroz, to accompany him while he collected fees, likely to back him up against recalcitrant vendors.¹²⁵ After being arrested, Comisaría personnel confiscated Ortiz's gun, stole thirty pesos in collected market fees, and ripped his official Treasury credential to shreds. When Martínez protested the theft, police arrested him as well, without formally filing charges. In the Comisaría's holding cells, Ortiz and Martínez were subjected to further indignities. When they protested their mistreatment, the police threatened to charge them with calumny. Ortiz threatened retaliation from the well-placed head of the Oficina de Mercados—Lieutenant Colonel Alberto Cárdenas, brother to the president—but the police belittled his efforts, saying that they would arrest the Lieutenant Colonel, too, if he tried to intervene. After a night in the cells, during which time many fellow detainees also complained of theft by the police, Ortiz and Martínez were both sent,

¹²⁵ The exact relationship between Ortiz and Martínez is opaque. Martínez, a leatherworker, claimed that he knew Ortiz because they were “vecinos,” although they actually lived far apart—Martínez in Tacuba, and Ortiz on the south side of the Centro. Martínez said that he had run into Ortiz by chance, and the latter invited him along as he collected fees from vendors. Ortiz, in his statement, largely ignored Martínez, only mentioning that he had been with Ortiz and that he had seen everything. Between Martínez's presence (and Ortiz's apparent downplaying of it), Ortiz having been armed, and the accusation against him, it seems likely that Ortiz hoped to use intimidation as a tool against obstinate vendors. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2976, Exp. 499459: Abuso de Autoridad, Robo.

briefly, to the city jail.¹²⁶ Although the case included no direct allegations that the vendor had paid off the police, the routinization of bribery, especially in the area around the Merced Market, makes it probable that she had, or that she had arranged for police protection through other means. In any case, the incident clearly suggests how vendors could employ their connections with the police in their own defense against other state authorities. It also suggests how police themselves acted aggressively to maintain their own hold over vendors and to exclude other agents who claimed authority over their spaces.

Ortiz's case further sheds light on how police protection of vendors was supported by structures of complicity and impunity within the police department. After leaving the city jail, Ortiz charged police with abuse of authority and theft. However, despite his determination to proceed, as shown by his repeatedly appearing in court to push the case along, the investigation moved only haltingly over the course of the following year and proved inconclusive. Ortiz gave the badge number of the police who had arrested him—No. 369—but the court was slow to find the gendarme. Nearly eleven months after the incident, the court finally issued a summons; however, police personnel had changed, and Gendarme 369 had only held that number for a month.¹²⁷ Moreover, while he had previously spent years stationed just a few blocks from the

¹²⁶ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2976, Exp. 499459: Abuso de Autoridad, Robo. According to Ortiz, several other people were brought into the holding cells with him and complained of theft by the police. On Lázaro Cárdenas naming his brother to the head of the Oficina de Mercados: Bleyntat, *Vendor's Capitalism*, 114.

¹²⁷ Although badge numbers were intended as a way to identify police, it was not uncommon for irregularities around badges, including regular changes, to impede finding accused police. In one example, after gendarme 262—the victim knew his address and his first name, Juan—was accused of abuses in 1944, the Jefatura took over a month to respond to requests for questioning before it sent a gendarme who had only recently received that badge. Having read newspaper reports alleging abuses by gendarme 262, he had set out to clear his name, speaking with the victim's sister (after failing to find the victim) and passing on a rumor that the abuses had actually been committed by gendarmes 3260, Gregorio Torres Camacho, and 292, Pedro Barbosa Isais, both of whom had since supposedly deserted. However, Barbosa (gendarme 292) was soon questioned, having not actually deserted. He denied any involvement, and noted that he had only recently received the badge. The former holder of badge 292, he said, had been a gendarme named Juan who had deserted and who had coincidentally lived at his same address. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the case went unresolved. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3634, Exp. 650750: 1945, Abuso de Autoridad, Robo, Lesiones.

incident, he simply denied knowing the name or new number of the gendarme involved in the incident. Despite the high likelihood that the gendarme was covering for his coworker, officials dropped their efforts to find the arresting officer.

Meanwhile, the investigation bogged down in the question of which Delegación officials were implicated. Ortiz stated that the Juez Calificador, the Juez's Assistant, and the Cabo de Puertas had all been involved. After nearly ten months of desultory investigation, Judicial Police compiled a rather different list, inexplicably leaving out the Juez Calificador and instead pointing to several subordinates in the office: Manuel Zuñiga (the Juez Calificador's assistant), Cosme Hinojosa (the "cajero" on duty in the holding cell), Teófilo Huerta (the Cabo de Puertas), and José Vázquez Huerta (the telephone operator). Zuñiga, the Juez Calificador's assistant, was never questioned, as he was reputed to be "an element of recognized honorability, and incapable of committing any action that is not within his duties," leaving him automatically beyond suspicion despite Ortiz's charges.¹²⁸ Under questioning by the Judicial Police, Hinojosa, the "cajero" who was accused of having stolen the thirty pesos from Ortiz, simply denied that the tax collector had carried any money with him when he entered the station. Hinojosa also failed to appear for further questioning by the judge, despite being summoned, but apparently faced no repercussions. Huerta, the Cabo de Puertas, claimed that he had been out of the office for dinner at the time of the incident, and had been temporarily replaced by the telephone operator,

Similarly, after prosecutorial authorities requested Servicio Secreto agents 186 and 202 for questioning related to allegations of abuse of authority in 1943, the Sub-Jefe de la Policía claimed that agent 202 could not be summoned, as Servicio Secreto badge numbers only went up number 200 (and agent 202 was thus implied to not exist). However, under further pressure from prosecutorial authorities, the Jefatura eventually sent agent 202 (a trainee agent, perhaps explaining the purported badge irregularity—although there is no reason why the Sub-Jefe would not have known that trainees received badge numbers over 200). TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3536, Exp. 630477: 1943, Abuso de Autoridad, Ataques a las Garantías Individuales.

¹²⁸ According to the Judicial Police report, Zuñiga "es un elemento de honorabilidad reconocida e incapaz de cometer acto alguno que no esté comprendido dentro del cumplimiento del deber, antecedentes que han sido confirmados por bastantes y diferentes elementos."

Vázquez, a claim which was accepted. Vázquez had been questioned much earlier, and upon being shown to Ortiz, the latter had sworn that Vázquez had not participated in the matter and was innocent. However, Vázquez was now impossible to find for questioning, as a separate investigation within the police department had pinned all the blame on him and he had been fired.¹²⁹ Of the numerous police and judicial personnel that Ortiz had signaled as responsible, in the end only one man, who Ortiz had explicitly not blamed, was punished. While the arrest and blatant mistreatment of a Federal District tax collector was apparently a bridge too far and demanded a response of some kind, the overall structure of police protection and corruption continued to function with the scapegoating of a relatively low-ranking station employee. Although perhaps an extreme example, the case highlights how impunity and complicity within the police force supported wider abuse, in the process helping to prop up the police protection market.

Finally, it must be noted that vendors also sought to use police power—whether legal, extralegal, or somewhere on the continuum between—to resolve their own internal conflicts. Despite the instances of vendors’ solidarity, whether expressed via collective petitions, by willingness to testify on each other’s behalf, or through other means, vendors were themselves often divided by competition.¹³⁰ Police officials themselves were aware of this. In 1910, for instance, Inspector General Félix Díaz received an anonymous denunciation of disorderly behavior in and around several fondas between Santo Domingo and Peralvillo on the north side of the capital, especially complaining of one named La Perla. In response, Díaz ordered

¹²⁹ Teófilo Huerta, in his statement, claimed that Vázquez “fue cesado precisamente por esa arbitrariedad”.

¹³⁰ Bleynat emphasizes divisions between competing vendors’ organizations in the 1940s and 1950s, while Konove discusses instances of conflict between vendors. Their discussions contrast with Barbosa Cruz’s greater emphasis on the building of solidarities between vendors. Bleynat, “The Business of Governing,” 374–80; Konove, *Black Market Capital*, 122; Barbosa Cruz, *El trabajo en las calles*.

increased police vigilance in the area. After carrying out the order, the Comisario of the Third Demarcación wrote to Díaz that he had found nothing amiss. He further explained that he frequently received anonymous denunciations of disorder in fondas that turned out to have no apparent basis in reality. He strongly suspected, he wrote, that the letters were written by the owners of rival fondas who wished to harm their competitors through false accusations, hoping to use police interference to harass other vendors.¹³¹ Indeed, it was not uncommon for established comerciantes—especially pulquería owners—to complain to authorities of the purported regulatory violations of competitors.¹³²

If such efforts by vendors relied on the formal authority of the police (and other authorities), other examples reveal how informal and extralegal uses of police power became important resources in vendors' conflicts with each other. Such cases suggest that the connections forged by the police's discretionary regulatory oversight could be applied to other matters quite apart from regulatory disputes. The case of the nut vendor Agustín López Márquez, briefly discussed in the previous chapter, sheds further light on vendors' uses of extralegal police power. On 3 April 1935, Agustín López Márquez, a nut vendor, was illegally arrested without a warrant while in his bodega near Merced Market, where police also took 100 pesos from him. After being detained for several hours in the Judicial Police office's holding cells, he was brought before the comerciantes Aurelio Tirado and Aniceto Olivares, their lawyer Juan Torres

¹³¹ AGN, Archivos Privados, Félix Díaz, Caja 7, Exp. 061, Fojas 719-722: Denunciation of 13 August 1910 and response from Third Demarcación.

¹³² For two such example, see the letter sent by several established pulquería owners in Xochimilco against the opening of a new pulquería in 1938, arguing that it would violate distance requirements, and the communication of 16 August 1937 noting the receipt of a complaint from the Unión de Propietarios de Pulquerías that the opening of a new pulquería would harm the interests of an already established pulquero. AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 352, Exp. 410/13: Letter of 14 September 1938; Communication of 16 August 1937. There are numerous other, similar letters contained in the same file.

Landa, and a police agent. Torres threatened to have López sent to the notorious Islas Marías penal colony unless he came to an arreglo with the comerciantes present to recognize debts he owed them and pay up. Under threat, López was forced to go to Torres's law office, where, despite being illiterate, he was made to sign documents purportedly recognizing his debts. He was then ordered, again under threat, to hand over 100 pesos to Torres (besides the money already stolen from him). Torres, Tirado, and the police agent (Olivares having already left) drove López in search of the money, visiting several of his colleagues to ask for cash before López's wife appeared and threatened legal action until the men left López with her. The next day, López formally filed charges in a letter to the Procurador de Justicia, alleging that he was the victim of abuse of authority (by the police), usurpation of public functions (by an unknown man who had assisted in the arrest and been present at the police station), threats (by the arresting officer and the lawyer), illegal deprivation of liberty, and fraud.¹³³

The resulting criminal investigation shed light on the reasons behind López's arrest. Like many comerciantes, López relied on networks of debt and credit with other vendors and wholesalers that stretched across the city, not just near Merced (although the majority of his contacts were there) but also in Tepito and San Miguel Chapultepec. López was hardly well-off, but he appeared to be relatively secure in his position, owning an establishment that was large enough to have at least one employee. As with many comerciantes, his debts were substantial, with many creditors claiming that he owed them anywhere from a few hundred to over a thousand pesos. Yet despite going years without paying them back, many continued to loan him money out of personal ties—one of the merchants who had been involved in the incident noted

¹³³ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2845, Exp. 463422: Abuso de Autoridad, Amenazas, Privación Ilegal de Libertad, Usurpación de Funciones Públicas, Fraude. Unless otherwise noted, the rest of the discussion on this case comes from this document.

that he had previously cancelled 600 pesos of a 1,600 peso debt out of friendship. However, López had still failed to pay, and what is more, had resorted to methods that other comerciantes viewed as disreputable. Several accused him of faking illiteracy in order to avoid recognizing contracts he had signed, “surely in order to secure the dirty businesses in which he always figures as a debtor” (as his former wholesale provider claimed).¹³⁴ Shortly before the time of the incident, his creditors Tirado and Olivares—the same comerciantes who appeared in the Judicial Police offices to arrange the *arreglo*—filed civil charges, spurring further desperate legal maneuvers on López’s part. In the resulting case, which apparently occurred more-or-less simultaneously with the criminal investigation, it was discovered that López had transferred all of his merchandise and property to his wife (although they were apparently not formally married), who then hired him as an employee in his former shop. López then filed bankruptcy, which at least temporarily delayed the civil court’s order to seize his goods to cover his debts.¹³⁵

Contract disputes like López’s were likely common, as the world of vending became increasingly—but never fully—formalized in the early twentieth century. López’s business stood at the crossroads of contract-based dealings and arrangements based on reputation and interpersonal connections. While some of López’s suppliers and creditors mentioned having

¹³⁴ Ibid. “seguramente para poder asegurar los sucios negocios en que figura siempre como deudor” (testimony of Luis G. Laris Alvarez). He also said López had wriggled free of his obligations by falsely accusing him of altering a contract. Similarly, López’s former bookkeeper said that he “cree firmamente que es uno de los muchos ardidos de los que se vale para no cumplir con sus compromisos, pues sabe que a otras personas también les ha quedado a deber diversas cantidades en mercancía y para el efecto les ha firmado documentos que más tarde ha desconocido.” (Testimony of Francisco Ordoñez Torres).

¹³⁵ Although everyone referred to Teodora as López’s wife, both López and Teodora also claimed to be single when giving their *generales* (despite otherwise describing themselves as husband and wife), suggesting that their marriage was not formalized but still widely recognized.

As the civil case is only referred to, not actually discussed in significant detail, in the criminal case, many details such as its timing are unclear. From witness testimony, it appears that the initial civil case filing occurred shortly before the incident, although it is not clear when it was found that López had transferred his property to his wife.

signed contracts with him, others stated that their dealings with him were entirely verbal. Such relationships were likely changing with growing literacy among the lower and working classes.¹³⁶ López's deployment of his uncertain literacy status appears to have been unusual: in any case, it was a risky strategy that cost him the trust of many colleagues and creditors, an undoubtedly dire situation that likely affected his ability to stay in business. But contract disputes and ambiguous situations generated by the tension between written contracts and unwritten agreements were likely regular occurrences among early-twentieth century vendors, especially under the economic pressures of the Great Depression. In such an environment, the police's ability to use (or at least credibly threaten) force must have appeared at times as an attractive resource for vendors at loggerheads. It was especially so given the slowness and expenses of the formal courts and their evident difficulties in dealing with a wily figure like López, who was clearly skilled at throwing a wrench into the workings of the judicial system.

Although the López case was in many ways singular, it nonetheless sheds light on what were likely fairly regular occurrences that usually did not make their way into the historical record. That López brought the case to court, generating a stream of paperwork, likely reflects the resources he could draw on. No mere street vendor, López had access to fairly substantial capital (even if much of it was on credit) and had a lawyer (evidently hired for the civil case). But despite his resources, and the evidently extralegal use of police power against him, the courts failed to carry out a substantial investigation. Vendors who sought to involve the police informally in their own disputes could do so with little fear of legal repercussions.

¹³⁶ On literacy rates, see the discussion in the Introduction.

Conclusion

The extortion of vendors by police undoubtedly continued past the 1930s, even if comerciantes' legal complaints of police extortion proportionally decreased precipitously with the increasing regularization of protection rackets. By the early 1940s, newspapers and petitions regularly described bribery and extortion as deep-rooted practices within the police.¹³⁷ Although many placed the blame on police's low salaries, poor training, and inconsistent discipline, some journalists also recognized that vendors got something out the system, as well. Discussing the nexus of corruption between police and vendors in 1940, *Excélsior* denounced how “there abound, disgracefully, those who cry to the heavens about the gendarmes' ‘mordidas’, but who, deep down, are satisfied with the situation” and depended on it to keep their own businesses going and to evade regulations.¹³⁸ At the same time, vendors also complained bitterly about police corruption, as in one telling 1947 incident. In late January of that year, the vendor María Trinidad Beltrán Estrada had gotten into an argument with a tax collector in Mercado de la Merced, leading the gendarme stationed there to confiscate her merchandise. Beltrán struggled with him, refusing to give up her parcel of goods, and reportedly shouted “all the police are thieves, and if it were not for the *puesteras* (female market vendors), they would not eat”.¹³⁹ Her

¹³⁷ For several representative petitions, see: AGN, Manuel Ávila Camacho, Caja 1125, Exp. 703.4/88: Letter from Mariano Ortiz Jiménez, 21 April 1942 (complaining that police in the city center selectively enforced regulations on keeping sidewalks clear to “estafa a los citados comerciantes”); *Ibid.*, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 402, Exp. 444.94/21: Letter from A. Trigos, undated, (denouncing in detail large-scale police extortion of vendors).

¹³⁸ “El dedo en la llaga,” *Excélsior*, 25 April 1940. Full quote: “¿Comerciantes hemos dicho? Sí, abundan, por desgracia, los que ponen el grito en el cielo ante las ‘mordidas’ de los gendarmes, pero que, en el fondo, están encantados de la situación.”

In 1942, Enrique Basulto Jaramillo complained that cabaret and drinking establishment owners were all too willing to pay off gendarmes, and regularly received protection and discretion for doing so. “Fue, es, y será – Algo más sobre el servicio de policía,” *El Gráfico*, 26 March 1942; “Fue, es, y será – Aspectos fundamentales del problema policíaco,” *El Gráfico*, 26 November 1942.

¹³⁹ TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 3952, Exp. 693213: 1947, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. Beltrán's insult was first stated as “eran unos ladrones todos los policías y que si no fuera por las puesteras, no comerían,” and later was presented in a simplified form as “eran [los policías] unos muertos de hambre que si no fueran por ellas [e.g., las

bitter complaint highlights the degree to which police corruption and the extortion of vendors was common knowledge.

Despite important continuities, the workings of police corruption undoubtedly shifted with institutional changes. Ingrid Bleyнат has noted that city authorities began to increasingly try to bring street vendors into the PRI's corporate structure beginning in the late 1940s, in the process raising tax revenues and disrupting widespread evasion and tax farming that had caused revenues to stagnate since the late 1920s or early 1930s. In the process, certain vendors' organizations became increasingly privileged as interlocutors between politicians and comerciantes themselves, delivering political support in return for illicit favor and, to some degree, formal benefits, arranged through the city government's Oficina de Mercados and similar offices.¹⁴⁰ It is likely that the growing power of such bureaucracies and popular organizations changed the terms of negotiation between police, vendors, and other officials, and perhaps shifted how vendors responded to disputes and abuses they would have previously brought to the courts.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, gendarmes retained an important position as crucial interlocutors in vendors' quotidian negotiations of regulations.

Although a full examination is beyond the scope of this chapter, similar relations undoubtedly formed between police and those involved in other fields marked by legal ambiguity or illegality, and with similar results. Prostitution, for instance, was heavily regulated from the 1870s until 1940; as with street vending, a variety of authorities sought to exert control

puesteras] no comerían.” It cannot be said with certainty that Beltrán actually said that, as the gendarme himself had every reason to exaggerate to avoid the charges against him. But even if Beltrán's outburst was made up by the gendarme, that he found it a convincing lie speaks to common perceptions of regular police extortion.

¹⁴⁰ Bleyнат, “The Business of Governing.”

¹⁴¹ On the regulation of street vending and its negotiation from the 1940s until 2010, see: Meneses Reyes, *Legalidades públicas*, chaps. 4–7.

over the trade, with police playing a crucial role.¹⁴² Unsurprisingly, police seem to have often taken advantage of their position, and were quite willing to enact violence against sex workers who resisted their demands.¹⁴³ As a result, prostitutes often depended on a web of interpersonal relationships with police, which both gave them clearer access to the city and its markets while enmeshing them in profoundly unequal social relationships mediated by violence and extortion. Drug trafficking, which increasingly came to be targeted by authorities after the Revolution, was well-known for generating its own networks of violent complicities and corruption between police and traffickers, who often were one and the same.¹⁴⁴ Gambling, too, undoubtedly brought gamblers, proprietors, and police into similar relationships.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² The best book on prostitution in Mexico City remains Bliss's work. Fabiola Bailón Vázquez's work presents a fascinating look at prostitution in Porfirian Oaxaca, emphasizing prostitutes' negotiations with political, medical, and police authorities. Bliss, *Compromised Positions*; Bailón Vázquez, *Mujeres en el servicio doméstico y en la prostitución*.

¹⁴³ In September of 1900, for instance, the administrator of a hotel often used for prostitution accused gendarme Gregorio Bridat of receiving free pulque from prostitutes while on duty, and of attempting to pressure her into giving him a room for free. TSJDF, S.XX, AH.I, Caja 0023, Exp. 002578: 1900, Injurias.

One memo (probably from 1925) by a police inspector detailed several typical abuses of power. One official harassed a Casa de Citas; Comisaría staff were involved in sex trafficking; and one official extorted purported prostitutes who paid to avoid being sent to the Zona de Tolerancia. Several officials had taken three detained women by car to San Ángel and Xochimilco "for a stroll" (*de paseo*), with one woman going missing in mysterious circumstances along the way. AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección de Policía, Archivo Correspondencia y Depósito, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 79.

In 1947, police forced the journalist Luis Yáñez Barrón and the cabaret worker Manuela Caballero Flores into a taxi after claiming to have seen them fighting in public (which the accused denied). While Yáñez was soon let free, the police did not release Caballero until after one of them forced her into sexual relations, although she later claimed it was consensual. As a cabaret worker, Caballero was seen as equivalent to a prostitute, and was clearly vulnerable to police violence. The prosecutorial agent, seeking to explain her reversal in testimony, went so far as to argue that she was undoubtedly used to such treatment and had simply decided that it was better to avoid angering the police with rape charges ("se dedica a la vida galante y lo ocurrido, una vez pasado el primer rato de disgusto, no implicaba ninguna grave ofensa, y le resulta muy preferible no dar que sentir a miembros de la Policía y menos de la calidad de esos"). TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3883, Exp. 683127: 1947, Abuso de Autoridad, Violación, Lesiones.

¹⁴⁴ On drugs and their policing, see: Astorga, "Traficantes de drogas, políticos y policías"; Isaac Campos, *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Pérez Montfort, *Tolerancia y prohibición*, chaps. 6–7; Pérez Ricart and Olvera Hernández, "Ascenso y declive de la Policía de Narcóticos"; Smith, *The Dope*.

For reports from 1925 of gendarmes selling drugs on the side, see: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección General de Policía, Archivo, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 48: Informe mensual of 4 March 1925; and *Ibid.*, Caja 1, Exp. 43.

¹⁴⁵ On the policing of gambling in early twentieth century Rio de Janeiro, see: Chazkel, *Laws of Chance*.

Ultimately, what an examination of police corruption around vending suggests is that corruption emerged out of the context of close ties and negotiations that formed by necessity between vendors and police. The paying of *mordidas* was simply one action out of many in a wider relationship. For vendors, the favor of the police—whether guaranteed with cash bribes, with the giving of alcohol, or simply through something approaching friendship—was a necessity to get around the often-vague restrictions contained in regulations that sought to strike a balance between modernizing plans and the practical necessity of their work. Nonetheless, relations between vendors and the police became increasingly regularized in the 1930s with the growth of protection rackets and the increasing frequency of extortion and violence. At the same time, police favor, as expressed through extralegal force, could be a vital tool for resolving disputes. However, there were limits to what police favor could grant vendors, especially given the overlapping jurisdictions of institutions tasked with regulating their work, which often led to conflicts generating further police violence. Moreover, the same tools of police discretion and extralegal force that could be so useful for vendors could also be directed against them. At the end of the day, the negotiation of police power bought vendors an unsteady access to the urban sphere, granting them a limited protection marked by the constant threat of violence and in practice setting the terms of their uneven citizenship rights in the modern city.

Chapter 5. **(Semi-)Private Policing and Public Order in Postrevolutionary Mexico City**

In the decades following the Revolution, Mexico City's rapid spatial and demographical growth overwhelmed municipal and federal governments' abilities to formally integrate the new spaces and residents of the city. One important aspect of this was the state's limited ability to police the fast-growing city: as discussed in previous chapters, complaints that the police force was overextended and inadequate for the sprawling capital were frequent. In response, authorities across the Federal District sought to supplement insufficient professional police with a variety of ostensibly "private" police forces, which relied on direct funding by—and at times, the direct participation of—neighborhood residents in locally-oriented security organizations. During the 1930s and 1940s, these groups expanded in size and came to be unified under governmental control. In 1941, they were regularized as the *Policía Auxiliar*, a dependency of the *Jefatura de Policía*, at which point they made up nearly a quarter of the city's police force. Their presence and prominence posed a never-fully-resolved challenge to conceptions of public authority, at the same time that they were crucial to the maintenance of public order in the fast-expanding city. In doing so, they became a vital arena for the negotiation of policing by the city's residents.

"Private"—or, more accurately, semi-private—policing provides a useful but little-explored vantage point from which to examine the construction of public order in postrevolutionary Mexico City. Private policing and its variants in the capital, and especially the role of private policing of public space, has rarely been analyzed historically.¹ Sociological

¹ Pablo Piccato has examined the history of private detectives, arguing that they gained in importance after the Revolution in part due to widespread distrust of the public police. Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 108–14. In contrast, this chapter focuses on private security forces that were more concerned with public order than with investigation.

works have usually argued that private policing was “marginal” until the neoliberal changes of the 1990s and beyond.² Scholars like Diane Davis have, in contrast, brought attention to the presence of private watchmen in the postrevolutionary years, and have discussed their incorporation into the public police force through the lens of the purportedly populist police reforms of the Cárdenas sexenio.³ However, such works have largely elided the question of how different forms of privatized policing impacted the making of public order and security.⁴ Drawing on an array of sources—court records, newspaper reporting, federal administrative files, and the often-underutilized records from the Federal District’s outlying municipalities—this chapter highlights how forms of private police emerged after the Revolution and how they came to be ambivalently regularized as a public service—the *Policía Auxiliar*—during the 1930s and 1940s. By historicizing private policing, this chapter does more than simply show that it predated neoliberalism (although it did) or that it played a significant role in urban public order (although it did). Rather, it destabilizes monolithic narratives of the state and rigid categories of public and private, and sheds light on how city authorities sought, through the institutional design of the new police force, to foster close connections between semi-private watchmen and city residents and thus to promote a degree of negotiability of policing, especially (though not only) by the middle- and upper-class capitalinos who most often hired *veladores*. In doing so, the *Policía*

² Müller, *The Punitive City*, 132.

³ Davis, “Historia de detectives,” 247n23; Davis, “Policing and Populism,” 146; Davis, “Policing and Regime Transition,” 77.

⁴ While Markus-Michael Müller has perceptively argued that the public police are effectively privatized through political networks and day-to-day negotiations, his necessarily present-focused work largely ignores the long history of this pattern in Mexico City and, more to the point, simplifies differences between different police forces and changes over time. Müller, *The Punitive City*; Markus-Michael Müller, “Addressing an Ambivalent Relationship: Policing and the Urban Poor in Mexico City,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 44, no. 2 (May 2012): 319–45.

Auxiliar extended and exemplified the negotiation that characterized capitalinos' relations with other, more traditionally public, police forces.⁵

This chapter has two chief aims. First, it hopes to highlight how authorities came to promote the logic of privatized security over public spaces, and the attendant ambiguity of both the private and the public in policing, as a tool of governance in response to the challenges of urbanization. Second, taking into account arguments developed in previous chapters, it argues that the ostensibly “private” and semi-private police differed from the rest of the (public) police force in degree rather than in kind. Rather than standing in stark contrast to the logics that governed public policing in practice—which has been shown in prior chapters to have been constantly negotiated by other actors and permeated with private uses of power—the Policía Auxiliar and its predecessors encapsulated and, to a degree, institutionalized them.

In developing these arguments, this chapter first examines how privatized forms of security became increasingly important during the Revolution and its aftermath. They were

⁵ In this sense, policing shares much with the provision of other public services. As an array of historians have noted, the extension of urban public services—lighting, electricity, water, plumbing, paved roads, etc.—to much of Mexico City, as with other Latin American cities, was a slow process that entailed petitions and negotiations by city residents and a substantial role for private developers, shaped by the insufficiency of municipal coffers to meet the challenges of modernization. Historians of colonias proletarias have noted how through them, the government regularized this process, allowing development with the understanding that services would be put into place piecemeal long after the initial settlement with residential assistance. However, (semi-)private policing differed from this pattern in a key respect. Although “private” police forces were initially framed as a temporary solution that would be replaced when possible by regular public police, over the course of the 1930s they gradually shifted into a permanent solution, offering a parallel police force operating alongside the Policía Preventiva. For several representative examples of the vast literature on public services, see: Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada*, chaps. 5–6; Ernesto Aréchiga Córdoba, “Lucha de clases en la ciudad: la disputa por el espacio urbano, ca. 1890-1930,” in *Los trabajadores de la ciudad de México 1860-1950: textos en homenaje a Clara Lida*, ed. Carlos Illades and Mario Barbosa Cruz (México: El Colegio de México; Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2013), 19–50; Hardoy, “Theory and Practice of Urban Planning,” 31, 41–47; de Antuñano, “Planning a ‘Mass City.’”

Amy Offner has suggested that states in Latin America (and elsewhere) never fully exercised sole public authority to begin with, as, with the expansion of the developmental state, important government functions came to be carried out through government-backed private or semi-private institutions. Mexico City’s semi-private police offer a small-scale and rather ad-hoc parallel to the regional development organizations and other institutions studied by Offner in Colombia. Amy C. Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

particularly numerous and well-developed on the capital's periphery, where municipal autonomy led authorities to seek cheap means of supplementing professional police forces; ostensibly "private," but in fact semi-public, organizations were among the most prominent, giving power over policing to business interests and the middle classes, especially. The chapter then trains its lens on Mexico City to trace the slow and conflict-ridden process whereby, from the 1930s into the 1940s, the capital's numerous private watchmen gradually became organized and came under the umbrella of the Jefatura de Policía. The Policía Auxiliar which emerged combined public and private logics, making the provision of public security dependent on private payment while explicitly encouraging ties between city residents and the watchmen they hired. The chapter then changes its focus to examine the practices of policing by the Policía Auxiliar and its predecessors in the 1930s and 1940s. It sketches the conflicts that developed out of the Policía Auxiliar's unsteady position between public and private, while further highlighting the profound overlaps between the Policía Auxiliar and other police.

Private Watchmen, Public Authority, and Municipal Autonomy

During the Porfiriato, private police of varying types began to emerge in Mexico City.⁶ Private investigators began to crop up by the late Porfiriato, their presence at times leading to conflicts with the Inspección General de Policía and its agents.⁷ Construction sites, which were

⁶ It should be noted that private security was not entirely new. Early in the Porfiriato, *El Monitor Republicano* noted that some city residents had taken to hiring private guards due to the lack of police protection, and criticized public authorities for their failure to provide security. "Guardas," *El Monitor Republicano*, 22 June 1878, 4.

⁷ In 1904, for instance, one investigative agent (of the Policía Reservada) got into an argument with three private investigators who showed up while he was staking out a suspected pawnshop burglar. They argued over whether or not the private investigators had arrest power, and the investigators also mocked the competence of the public police. The investigators were ultimately jailed for several nights before the judge determined there were no grounds to charge them. Notably, one of the investigators was a former Policía Reservada agent, suggesting how detectives readily moved between public and private even at an early date. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0303, Exp. 057622:

numerous in the fast-expanding city, regularly employed private watchmen (*veladores*), as did some markets and private businesses.⁸ Sparked by the chaos of the Revolutionary years—city authorities foundered amidst the collapse of the federal government and repeated military occupations, armed groups proliferated, and the police force shrank due to desertions—private security appears to have become more common in the 1910s and into the 1920s.⁹ In crime reporting, *veladores* frequently appeared guarding the homes of the wealthy (especially, but not only, in neighborhoods identified with the upper and middle classes like Colonia Juárez or Colonia Roma), or protecting businesses; shopkeepers in the commercial zones of the city regularly organized to collectively pay for hired armed guards to watch over their streets at night, supplementing the *Policía Preventiva*.¹⁰ At the same time, becoming a *velador* offered a

1904, *Faltas a la Policía, Usurpación de Funciones Públicas*. The Inspección General de Policía, perhaps concerned about the possibility of losing ground to competitors, denounced private police companies as incompetent fraudsters in 1905. “Las llamadas compañías privadas de policía,” *La Gaceta de Policía*, 5 November 1905, 2. Their criticism seems to have had little effect. By the last years of the Porfiriato, the city’s only police journal was in fact run by a private police company, which advertised on its cover. “Agencia de Policía Privada y de Informaciones [advertisement],” *Boletín de Policía*, 12 September 1909, 1.

⁸ For a private *velador* at a construction site requesting that the police arrest a supposed would-be thief, see: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 0368, Exp. 066218: 1904, *Ultrajes a la Policía*. Unsurprisingly, *veladores* often seem to have had close ties with the police; in one case from 1905, a *velador* at a construction site apparently regularly allowed a gendarme to drink inside while on duty. *Ibid.*, Caja 0391, Exp. 068086: 1905, *Abuso de Autoridad*. For an instance of a *velador* being employed by a bakery, see: *Ibid.*, Caja 0724, Exp. 127295: 1908, *Lesiones*. For another case of a *velador* guarding a construction site from 1914, and requesting and receiving police intervention over a suspected thief (ending in the suspect being shot), see: *Ibid.*, Caja 1274, Exp. 222889: 1914, *Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones*.

On the Porfirian construction boom, see: Dolores Morales, “La expansión de la ciudad de México en el Siglo XIX: el caso de los fraccionamientos.”

⁹ On the crisis of city government during the Revolution, see: Rodríguez Kuri, *Historia del desasosiego*, esp. Chaps. 3 and 4. On crime and police during the Revolution, see: Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 139–48; Pulido Esteva, “Profesional y discrecional,” 81–84. Pablo Piccato has noted that private investigation became increasingly common and prominent in the 1920s. Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 108–14.

¹⁰ For an assortment of such articles from *El Demócrata* on *veladores* guarding businesses, see: “Antes de anoche se registró un incendio en la ‘Quetzal’,” 21 November 1917, 3; “Pidió permiso para dormir, y se llevó la caja fuerte,” 8 May 1919, 6; “A pierna suelta,” 3 January 1920, 7; “Asaltaron a... ‘La Niña’,” 8 March 1920, 8; “Cayó una rata en la ratonera,” 1 November 1920, 5; “Caco paseo ayer en la madrugada sus audacias por las calles de la capital,” 6 January 1922, 1, 6; “Un robo rubiaresco intentado en la ‘Joyería Imperial’,” 18 April 1922, 1, 8; “Se decretó la formal prisión de los autores del robo a una Agencia del Radio,” 24 August 1923, 11. From the same paper, on *veladores* guarding homes and well-off neighborhoods: “Es impenetrable el misterio que envuelve a la tragedia de la casa de la colonia Roma,” 18 October 1919, 1, 5; “Un asalto que degeneró en batalla sostenida por los hombres del antifaz,” 17 July 1920, 1, 8; “El sobresalto del *velador*,” 21 August 1920, 9; “Un *velador* muerto por los pillos,” 5 October 1920, 5; “Confundiendo a un *velador* con un ladrón un gendarme le dió muerte disparándole un

relatively easy-to-enter job for working- and lower-class city dwellers. Many likely turned to the work on a temporary basis; a lengthy eulogy for one velador who was murdered while guarding a construction site, for example, described him as an honorable textile worker who became a watchman because he needed to provide for his family while his factory was on strike.¹¹

Although the Inspección General de Policía noted in 1926 that it had issued licenses to a number of veladores and private investigators, the majority were effectively unregulated.¹²

However, if a growing number of private and public spaces came to be surveilled by hired guards within Mexico City proper, the outlying municipalities of the Federal District witnessed the most intensive and large-scale experiments by local governments with what they usually termed private policing, as part of a broader attempt to reorganize public security. This stemmed from a combination of political and demographic changes. During the Revolution, the effective collapse of the federal government meant that municipal ayuntamientos, which had been limited to mere advisory boards since 1903, regained much of their political authority by default. After the Constitutionalist faction re-established control, municipalities retained a degree of autonomy until the 1929 centralization of governance (in Mexico City as well as the outlying

tiro,” 10 June 1924, 4. *El Demócrata* also regularly advertised velador jobs as well as the services of private police and investigative companies.

For a report on comerciantes from the Mercado de San Joaquín petitioning to name their own private watchman, replacing a previous one who they denounced as abusive, see: AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección de Policía, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 70: Petition, April 1925.

¹¹ “El misterioso asesinato de un obrero acaba de conmovier a las clases laborantes de la población de Tacubaya,” *El Demócrata*, 19 March 1922, 4.

¹² AHCM, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Inspección de Policía, Informes y Correspondencia, Caja 1, Exp. 139: “Informe de las labores desarrolladas por la Inspección General de Policía y sus dependencias, correspondiente al período del primero de septiembre de 1925 al quince de julio de 1926.” The report noted that it had issued licenses to 126 “Federal employees and members of Private Police,” oddly failing to distinguish between the two categories. This number undoubtedly covered only a small percentage of the overall number of veladores. The report did not further discuss private policing. It should also be noted that the report noted only about 700 credentials for the formal police, suggesting that many lacked said credentials.

municipalities) in the Departamento del Distrito Federal.¹³ As with elsewhere in postrevolutionary Mexico, the municipalities were the site of tumultuous and often violent electoral politics; shootouts between opposing parties, attacks on city councilmen, and assassination plots were common occurrences.¹⁴ Moreover, these changes occurred in the context of the rapid growth of many municipalities, as discussed in the Introduction; if Tacubaya's population, for instance, was around 3,000 for most of the nineteenth century, it reached nearly 60,000 in 1921.¹⁵ Demographic growth placed increasing pressures on municipal governments at the same time that the return to autonomy left them largely dependent on their own limited financial resources.¹⁶ With budgets tight, municipal governments were hard-pressed to fund their police forces—a necessity, as the Gendarmería no longer policed the municipalities—leaving municipal professional corps small and fueling recurrent complaints of insecurity.¹⁷ The situation

¹³ Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 157–84; Mario Barbosa Cruz, “La política en la Ciudad de México en tiempos de cambio (1903-1929),” in *Historia política de la Ciudad de México (desde su fundación hasta el año 2000)*, ed. Ariel Rodríguez Kuri (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2012), 363–415.

¹⁴ Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 173–79; Barbosa Cruz, “La política en la Ciudad de México en tiempos de cambio,” 381–82; Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, 57. For a lengthy series of newspaper clippings on political instability and violence in the Federal District in the 1920s, compiled by a DGIPS agent, see: AGN, Gobernación, DGIPS, Caja 1, Exp. 1.

¹⁵ Miranda Pacheco, *Tacubaya*, 41. The 1921 figure comes from the national census of that year. Tacubaya was the largest of the municipalities, but only barely. According to the 1910 Census, at which point Tacubaya had a population of 38,000, Tacuba and Xochimilco both had over 30,000 inhabitants, while Iztapalapa and Mixcoac had over 20,000.

¹⁶ On small municipal budgets, see: Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 172.

¹⁷ In late 1918, San Ángel had 15 foot police and a few officers for the entire area, while in 1917 Tacubaya—evidently with more cash on hand—theoretically had 113 police, although many posts were unfilled and residents frequently blamed insecurity on the insufficiency of the municipal police force. In 1920 Tacubaya expanded its police force to 150. On the size of municipal police forces, see: AHCM, Municipalidades, San Ángel, Policía, Caja 242, Exp. 59; *Ibid.*, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 375, Exp. 49; “Los intereses de los vecinos serán bien vigilados,” *El Demócrata*, 9 July 1920, 5. Complaints by residents are relatively common. In 1916, Rafael Xicoy y Wright wrote to the Political Prefect of Tacubaya to complain of several recent robberies in the area and to request improved lighting and police service. AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Diversos, Caja 80, Exp. 8. That same year, residents of Velazquez de León street, also in Tacubaya, similarly wrote to officials to complain of theft and request greater public vigilance. AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 374, Exp. 36. Similar complaints persisted into the 1920s; see: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 392, Exp. 8. Residential complaints in Mixcoac are also mentioned in: “Los vecinos de esta municipalidad víctimas de los cacos,” *El Demócrata*, 17 February 1921, 8.

was such in Mixcoac that the Presidente Municipal was reduced to personally carrying out nightly patrols on horseback along the Calzada de Tlalpan road.¹⁸

Cash-strapped authorities sought out new means to maintain public order, turning to a variety of forms that, in an effort to keep costs to a minimum, were organized at the local level.¹⁹ In some areas—particularly rural zones far distant from the capital—officials sought to explicitly revive the forms of residential policing that had dominated until the late nineteenth century (as discussed in Chapter One) as a supplement to thinly-stretched professional police forces.²⁰ In 1918, the police chief of Tetelpa, a small pueblo in San Ángel, called a meeting of residents to organize a self-funded ronda nighttime patrol of the town. The majority of the town’s population agreed, despite concerns that doing so could provoke tensions with nearby encampments of revolutionary soldiers.²¹ However, if the ronda offered the possibility of order on the cheap, it also carried with it the same tensions that had plagued nineteenth century residential policing. In 1923, for instance, Miguel Rodríguez appeared before the Ministerio Público in Xochimilco to file a series of accusations against Toribio Rodríguez, the police chief of the small town of San Pedro Atocpan in Milpa Alta. According to Miguel, Toribio had entered his home in the company of armed men “without any order whatsoever, taking me by force on the pretext of

¹⁸ “Será vigilada la calzada de Tlalpan,” *El Demócrata*, 10 November 1919, 5.

¹⁹ Something of this sense of experimentation is suggested by one celebratory article from 1921 discussing efforts to create a new police force for the large lower- and working-class neighborhood of Colonia Santa Julia in Tacuba. Although the project was said to draw inspiration from models in the United States, the details were left extremely hazy. Nonetheless, it suggests how municipal authorities sought out new ways of organizing public order during the period of municipal autonomy. “La acción múltiple de la policía,” *El Demócrata*, 25 February 1921, 8.

²⁰ See, for example: “La formación de guardias especiales de seguridad,” *El Demócrata*, 1 March 1921, 7. The article stipulated that the new guard service would be carried out by “los vecinos de los diferentes barrios” of Xochimilco. It seems likely that this is the same police organization referred to as a “guardia civil” in an earlier article about Xochimilco: “El cuerpo de guardia civil,” *El Demócrata*, 25 February 1921, 8.

This was not limited to the Federal District. For example, Christina M. Jiménez has noted that, in Morelia, city authorities reestablished the ronda system during the Revolution. Jiménez, *Making an Urban Public*, 156–58.

²¹ AHCM, Municipalidades, San Ángel, Policía, Caja 242, Exp. 40: Communication of 19 September 1918. According to the 1921 Census, Tetelpa had a total of 408 inhabitants.

ronda service” and beating him, mistreating him due to a history of personal disputes between the two. Miguel was then thrown into the local jail, only leaving (in his telling) when a drunk group of prisoners—men from Milpa Alta who he claimed not to know—broke open the door and took him along as they fled. After his (rather improbable) escape, Miguel then accused Toribio of a series of offenses, including “violating the Constitution our Magna Carta, that nobody can be made to perform personal service without being paid their just compensation.”²² Miguel’s arguments, especially that the unpaid forced labor of the ronda was unconstitutional, were similar to arguments that had been made against the ronda in the nineteenth century (see Chapter One).

More often, local authorities turned to other forms that blended private and public logics, granting authority over public spaces to armed groups paid for and often largely run by private citizens (many of them apparently merchants) and residential organizations. In the summer of 1915, complaints from hacienda owners, merchants, and other residents of Azcapotzalco (just northeast of Mexico City) about robberies and assaults spurred the local police chief to assemble a group of local merchants and vecinos. He proposed that they privately fund and create a new mounted police force, “in this manner the population being cared for and watched over by people of its confidence.”²³ Similarly, in 1918, the Tacubaya city council debated forming a new private police corps to be paid for by “commerce and individuals.”²⁴ That same year in Colonia de Guadalupe in San Ángel, the local Junta Directiva de Mejoras—a type of residential association

²² TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 1777, Exp. 320405: 1923, Allanamiento de Morada, Golpes y Abuso de Autoridad. Toribio defended his actions not only by arguing that he was justified in arresting Miguel, but also by pointing to orders from the Presidente Municipal that he gather twelve people to provide security during a village festival. The case petered out inconclusively.

²³ AHCM, GDF, Secretaría de Gobierno, Comisariías, Caja 4, Exp 209: Communication of 1 July 1915.

²⁴ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Actas de Cabildo, Caja 2, Exp. 2.

which had become common during the Porfiriato as a means of organizing petitions and gathering resources to construct urban improvements in underserved neighborhoods—wrote to the Ayuntamiento that insecurity threatened “not only our properties, but also our persons or our employees.” The Junta therefore requested permission to form a resident-funded armed police service for the colonia, to be composed of residents nominated by the Junta but subject to oversight by the Presidente Municipal.²⁵ In early 1921, over 150 comerciantes in Tacuba organized themselves into a “Junta de Vigilancia Civil” to assist in organizing public security.²⁶ The Mixcoac Ayuntamiento also approved a plan in February of 1921, spurred both by concerns that the municipal police were too few in number and by difficulties with the Compañía de Luz y Fuerza that threatened to cut off power to a quarter of the municipality’s streetlights (although the plan may not have been put into practice as the Ayuntamiento soon resolved matters with the power company). Lacking the funds to hire more police, the commission instead proposed that city councilmen approach the residents of their home districts and “make them see the convenience” of paying out of their own pockets for a hired watchman (to be paid one-and-a-half pesos per day, roughly comparable with police pay in the capital) on every block. The rules drawn up gave the Presidente Municipal ultimate authority, but gave city councilmen and vecinos the power to nominate watchmen, and stipulated that the watchmen could not under any

²⁵ AHCM, Municipalidades, San Ángel, Policía, Caja 242, Exp. 15. Colonia de Guadalupe had a population of just 373 in 1921, according to the Census.

On Juntas de Mejoras during the Porfiriato, see: Rodríguez Kuri, *La experiencia olvidada*, 96–98. After the Revolution, these groups became more common as vital interlocutors between residents of underserved neighborhoods and the city government; they also increasingly became tied to political concerns. Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, chaps. 3, 6; de Antuñano, “Planning a ‘Mass City’”; Esther Martina Vázquez Ramírez, *Organización y resistencia popular en la ciudad de México durante la crisis de 1929-1932* (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1998), 54–84.

²⁶ “La Junta de Vigilancia Civil comenzará a funcionar,” *El Demócrata*, 7 March 1921, 8.

circumstances be ordered away from their designated neighborhood.²⁷ Such proposals offered vecinos (and especially merchants and property owners, as suggested by several proposals) a deal: security over their public spaces by actors that they selected, in return for their paying for the service.

Tacubaya, the most populous municipality besides Mexico City itself, witnessed the most extensive development and deployment of such police forces in a range of forms.²⁸ They were largely organized to protect either downtown Tacubaya's commercial zones, or relatively recently-constructed middle- or upper-class residential neighborhoods. Some, like the *Policía Privada de Colonia Bella Vista*—based just southwest of central Tacubaya in a neighborhood identified with the middle classes (although as with other neighborhoods it undoubtedly hosted a wide socioeconomic range of inhabitants)—were essentially rondas in all but name.²⁹ In contrast, the *Policía Privada de los Vecinos de Tacubaya*—based in middle-class Colonia Escandón—and the *Policía Privada de la Colonia de Chapultepec Heights*—which kept watch over the wealthy new suburb of the same name, later called Lomas de Chapultepec—were instead based on the

²⁷ AHCM, Municipalidades, Mixcoac, Ayuntamiento, Caja 2, Exp. 26. The proposal was debated on 15 February 1921 and approved on 24 February. The *Compañía de Luz y Fuerza* reached an agreement to continue providing power to the municipality's streetlights just a few days later. [Untitled], *El Demócrata*, 25 February 1921, 8.

²⁸ It must be noted that it is difficult to specify how many such organizations existed, given large gaps in the archival record. Complicating matters is that names were rarely consistent even for the same police force. In a string of communications in August of 1922, the same private police organization was referred to by its chief, Celso Rojas, as the *Policía Privada de los Vecinos de Tacubaya*, while the Municipal president called it the *Policía Privada de los Vecinos de la Colonia Escandón*. Further documents from the file on the same organization settled on the awkwardly long “*Policía Privada que desempeñará el servicio de vigilancia nocturno en las calles de Hidalgo, Industria y demás adyacentes de esta Ciudad*” (“Private Police that will carry out the service of nocturnal vigilance on the streets of Hidalgo, Industria, and the other adjacent streets of this city”), a name that persisted into 1923, after which the organization seems to have returned to being called *Policía Privada de los Vecinos de Tacubaya*, or alternately the *Policía Privada de la Junta de Vecinos de Tacubaya*. See: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, *Policía*, Caja 385, Exp. 11; *Ibid.*, Caja 389, Exp. 60; *Ibid.*, Caja 397, Exp. 4. It is clear from a variety of factors that all these terms referred to the same organization. I have attempted to standardize the names in this presentation.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Caja 384, Exp. 67: Novedades reports of 25, 27, and 29 July 1922. Colonia Bella Vista was formally developed in 1919; Armando Cisneros Sosa has described it as being populated by “comfortable families.” Jiménez Muñoz, *La traza del poder*, 178; Armando Cisneros Sosa, *La ciudad que construimos: registro de la expansión de la ciudad de México (1920-1976)* (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Iztapalapa, 1993), 19.

hiring of guards.³⁰ Indeed, the Chapultepec Heights force drew *veladores* from across the city. Its chief and sub-chief were both residents of the suburb, but only two of the twelve *veladores* under them were; seven lived elsewhere in Tacubaya, two lived in the neighboring municipality of Tacuba, and one lived on the Calzada de la Viga in a working-class neighborhood of Mexico City far distant from Chapultepec Heights.³¹

Despite their different ways of being organized, and their oversight of public spaces, all of Tacubaya's organized non-professional police forces were invariably referred to as "private police." The insistence on the term perhaps reflects the degree to which municipal officials played a rather minimal role in their functioning, although they made sure to maintain nominal authority. In theory, the *Presidente Municipal* held authority over Tacubaya's "private" police, who were required to "offer respect and obedience" to him.³² Indeed, the *Presidente Municipal* could step in to resolve internal disputes. For example, after Juan López refused to take his turn patrolling in Colonia Bella Vista in 1922, griping "that he wasn't a shepherd to take care of sheep," the head of the *ronda* wrote to the *Presidente Municipal* to resolve the matter; he ordered López removed from the rotating assignment to avoid further arguments.³³ The *Presidente Municipal* also had control over licenses, which were required for the armed *veladores*, in theory

³⁰ On the *Policía Privada de los Vecinos de Tacubaya*, see: AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía*, Caja 406, Exp. 12. On the *Policía Privada de la Colonia de Chapultepec Heights*, see: *Ibid.* Caja 406, Exp. 4. Colonia Escandón was formalized in 1916, and is described by Sergio Miranda Pacheco as populated by families of the "decent" classes. Jiménez Muñoz, *La traza del poder*, 178; Miranda Pacheco, *Tacubaya*, 115, 136, 203. Chapultepec Heights was separated from the bustle of central Tacubaya by Chapultepec Forest. Influenced by the British Garden City ideal, the suburb was full of large lots, winding tree-lined streets, and spacious private homes. It quickly attracted the elite of Mexico City society, seeking distance from the crowded avenues of the capital. María del Carmen Collado Herrera, "Chapultepec Heights: un negocio urbano en la Ciudad de México posrevolucionario," *Antropología. Revista interdisciplinaria del INAH* 72 (2003): 42–51; Miranda Pacheco, *Tacubaya*, 124–36.

³¹ AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía*, Caja 406, Exp. 4.

³² The quote comes from the *Presidente Municipal*'s communication officially recognizing the *Policía Privada de Colonia Chapultepec*. AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía*, Caja 390, Exp. 24.

³³ AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía*, Caja 384, Exp. 67. The other members of the *Policía Privada* were particularly frustrated with López because he had agreed with the founding of the organization.

giving him another means of controlling the Policía Privada. In practice, though, incidents like the dispute resolution in Bella Vista were rare, and municipal authorities gave residential organizations and business interests a wide degree of latitude in running the “private” police forces. The residential organization in Chapultepec Heights, for example, included in its license requests none of the information usually required—such as details on fitness for the job, lack of previous arrests, or honorability—but instead simply informed the Presidente Municipal of the licenses that it needed for veladores it had already named.³⁴ Chapultepec Heights was hardly unique. In 1926, for example, the director of the Excelsior Shoe Company—one of the largest factories in the municipality—wrote that Manuel Martínez would continue to serve as commandant of the Private Police of the Junta de Vecinos de Tacubaya, which the Presidente Municipal approved.³⁵ In February of 1927, the Junta de Vigilancia Privada de Tacubaya informed the Presidente Municipal of funding shortages caused by “the slowness of the *vecinos* to pay their quotas.” As a result, the junta decreased the salaries of its watchmen, while also suspending its commandant (the same Manuel Martínez named in 1926), all without question from municipal authorities.³⁶ This practice held even outside of officially-recognized residential organizations. In 1925, about a dozen residents and business owners in central Tacubaya requested and easily received authorization to pay for and arm a watchman to guarantee security on their street corner at night for “passers-by and residents.”³⁷ In general, municipal authorities simply rubber-stamped decisions that were made by residential organizations and businesses.

³⁴ Ibid., Caja 406, Exp. 4; Ibid., Caja 417, Exp. 38. Indeed, the only time the honorability and hard-working nature of the private police came up was not specifically in a license request; rather, it came in response to the police confiscating the pistol of one private police in Chapultepec Heights. See: Ibid., Caja 401, Exp. 24.

³⁵ Ibid., Caja 397, Exp. 4. The Excelsior factory was one of the most modern industrial shoe producers in Mexico City, employing 800 workers in 1911. Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 64.

³⁶ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 406, Exp. 12.

³⁷ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 392, Exp. 8.

Even the municipal police, who demanded a degree of authority over the veladores, had limits. A brief set of regulations issued in August of 1922, following a violent altercation between a velador from the *Policía Privada de Vecinos de Tacubaya* and municipal police officials, stated that veladores were to be subject to the orders of the police commandant and had to inform him of their activities, but also stipulated that veladores could not be ordered to leave their assigned posts without previous notice, an important limitation that differentiated the *Policía Privada* from public, municipal police.³⁸

Policía Privada daily activities reports suggest that veladores, who operated in areas that mixed residential and commercial use, tended to exercise a great deal of discretion while also acting in a public order role with some frequency.³⁹ On the night of July 25, for instance, the *Policía Privada de Bella Vista* arrested one man for assault, and also detained a municipal gendarme and a bar manager for having fired pistols into the air while drunkenly shouting a toast. Notably, while the assault suspect was immediately brought to the municipal police to begin legal proceedings, the bar manager and gendarme were not arrested but simply disarmed

³⁸ AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía*, Caja 385, Exp. 11.

³⁹ Although they were required by the municipal government to send in daily reports of their activities, in practice few such documents survive. See: AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía*, Caja 384, Exp. 67 (July 1922, *Policía Privada de Colonia Bella Vista*); *Ibid.*, Caja 385, Exp. 1 (August 1922, *Policía Privada de los Vecinos de Tacubaya*); *Ibid.*, Caja 389, Exp. 60 (October 1924, *Policía Privada de los Vecinos de Tacubaya*); *Ibid.*, Caja 411, Exp. 5 (July 1928, *Policía Privada de los Vecinos de Tacubaya*). It should be noted that most of these monthly collections of daily reports are incomplete, missing reports from a day or two per month. In contrast, the archival collection of daily reports from the municipal police is far more extensive.

The daily activity reports from both forces suggest that they were stationed in visible public spaces and in areas with some degree of commercial as well as residential activity. For instance, in *Bella Vista* the private police seem to have often been posted on the *Puente de Cuernavaca*, a seemingly well-trafficked area (given the frequent mention of scandalous crowds) near shops. In *Escandón*, the private police seem to have largely been clustered around the *Jardín Hidalgo*, just on the edge of the main street of *Avenida Jalisco*. On *Bella Vista*: AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía*, Caja 384, Exp. 67. On *Escandón*: *Ibid.*, Caja 384, Exp. 9; *Ibid.*, Caja 385, Exp. 1.

While there are no official reports from *Chapultepec Heights*, a fragment does exist within another document. In February of 1927, private police officials requested a new license for one of its members, saying that he had lost it while riding on horseback in pursuit of a possible kidnapping. It is notable that the private police in *Chapultepec Heights* seem to have been mounted, rather than strictly posted on foot at street corners. AHCM, *Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía*, Caja 406, Exp. 20.

and allowed to continue on their way, suggesting that the ronda displayed a degree of discretionary tolerance toward them.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, if the Policía Privada de Bella Vista at least filed relatively detailed reports with municipal authorities, the Policía Privada de los Vecinos de Tacubaya filed almost nothing. While a few incidents were mentioned—a shootout, a handful of arrests, and a house fire—the vast majority of reports simply stated that there were “no new occurrences” to discuss: only three incidents were reported each for August 1922 and October of 1924, and none at all in July of 1928. Notably, the incidents that were noted were predominantly either those that involved the municipal police, or those that were high visibility (such as the house fire and the shootout).⁴¹ Given the well-trafficked spaces they surveilled, and the frequency of public order arrests by municipal police in the same areas, it is highly unlikely that the private police simply had little to do.⁴² Instead, the reports imply that they dealt with the great majority of matters informally, without involving municipal authorities, although this was a difference of degree rather than of kind with the municipal police (who, as discussed in previous chapters, certainly employed discretion and informal dispute resolution).

Similar neighborhood-based, ostensibly “private” police continued to spring up on the capital’s periphery after the 1929 reorganization of the Federal District did away with municipal autonomy.⁴³ As discussed in Chapter Two, many of Mexico City’s newly-constructed neighborhoods lacked consistent access to police, spurring recurrent complaints and demands at

⁴⁰ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 384, Exp. 67.

⁴¹ AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 385, Exp. 1; *Ibid.*, Caja 389, Exp 60; *Ibid.*, Policía, Caja 411, Exp. 5.

⁴² Evidence suggests that the municipal police fairly regularly made arrests for a number of conflicts. See, for example, the daily *novedades* reports from October 1924: AHCM, Municipalidades, Tacubaya, Policía, Caja 389, Exp. 59.

⁴³ On the 1929 centralization of authority through the formation of the Departamento del Distrito Federal, see: Miranda Pacheco, *La creación del DDF*; Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, 67–72; Hernández Franyuti, *El Distrito Federal*, 180–88.

the same time that rapid urban growth far outstripped the city government's ability to keep up with service. In response to the city government's incapacity, residents and development companies turned to privatized means of providing security, hiring their own armed guards. As in Tacubaya, this was particularly common in newly-built, ostensibly middle- and professional class neighborhoods with limited access to public services like Colonia del Valle, Hipódromo, and La Condesa (in the southwest) or Industrial (in the north), all of which had their own "private" police forces until late 1933.⁴⁴ In 1932 in Colonia del Valle, for example, the residential Junta de Vecinos not only petitioned city authorities for services like electric lighting, but also offered to fund their own security, gaining permission to organize their own private security force for the neighborhood.⁴⁵ Neighborhood-organized private police sat alongside large numbers of hired *veladores*—watching over homes, businesses, and, increasingly, parked cars—especially as work as a watchman continued to be an attractive option in the face of economic recession.⁴⁶

The Making of the Policía Auxiliar: Institutional Change, 1930-1940s

If municipal governments in the 1920s had been content with only exercising nominal control over "private" police forces, during the 1930s city authorities—especially the Jefatura de

⁴⁴ Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Informe presidencial y memoria del Departamento del Distrito Federal que rinde el C. Jefe del mismo Lic. Aarón Sáenz, por el periodo administrativo comprendido entre el 1o. de julio de 1933 y el 30 de junio de 1934* (México: Talleres Linotipográficos de la Penitenciaría del Distrito Federal, 1934), 163.

⁴⁵ The petition is discussed in: Cisneros Sosa, *La ciudad que construimos*, 60. Newspaper reports from later that year show that the Junta de Vecinos was running a *Policía Privada* in the neighborhood. "Dificultades en una colonia," *El Nacional*, 29 October 1932, Second Section, 1, 3.

⁴⁶ Diane Davis states that the number of private watchmen increased due to the Great Depression: Davis, "Policing and Populism," 247n23. By 1933, there were officially 781 *veladores* and 165 car watchmen (termed "vigilantes"), many of whom would have previously belonged to neighborhood forces: Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Informe presidencial y memoria del Departamento del Distrito Federal que rinde el C. jefe del mismo, Lic. Aarón Sáenz, por el periodo administrativo comprendido entre el 1o. de Julio de 1932 y el 30 de Junio de 1933* (México: Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1933), 199.

Policía—increasingly pressed to exert greater control over them, on the basis that their policing of public spaces made government control imperative. The result was a lengthy and conflictive process whereby veladores were gradually brought under the umbrella of public authority, coming to make up a substantial proportion of the police force.⁴⁷ However, their underlying logic of making security dependent on private payment rather than a fully public service persevered.

At the start of the 1930s, private (or semi-private) policing was barely debated in Mexico City, in contrast to elsewhere in Mexico. Conflicts were particularly heated in Veracruz. In 1918, commercial interests in the port of Veracruz created the *Policía Privada de Comercio* to protect the port's warehouses, railroad stations, shops, and other commercial infrastructure.⁴⁸ Although framed at its founding as a response to frequent robberies, the institution protected commercial interests during a period of increasingly conflictive mass politics, which culminated in a massive general strike in 1922.⁴⁹ Initially supported by city authorities, tensions grew during the late 1920s over the independence of the *Policía Privada*. After city authorities ordered the force to coordinate with the municipal police, its leadership filed a lawsuit against the order, leading to a court battle that reached the national Supreme Court. In September of 1930, the court ruled that the *Policía Privada*'s authority over "public vigilance" was sufficient reason for the government

⁴⁷ In emphasizing conflicts over state control, my account differs from that of Diane Davis, who has variously argued that veladores themselves organized and forced authorities to bring them into the public police force (Davis, "Historia de detectives," 80n15.), or that police chiefs took the lead on organizing veladores and brought them under state control, slowly in the early 1930s but quickly under Cárdenas as the veladores were enthusiastic Cardenistas (Davis, "Policing and Populism," 146; Davis, "Policing and Regime Transition," 77.).

⁴⁸ "Los comerciantes pedirán se derogue una disposición que dicen les perjudica," *El Demócrata*, 8 July 1918, 5.

⁴⁹ Popular organizing, which was in the early 1920s backed by the port's mayor, was focused on the issue of rents, although the rent strike's anarcho-syndicalist leader sought to expand the movement into other issues as well, undoubtedly to the consternation of commercial interests. On politics and popular organizing in Veracruz (city), see: Andrew Grant Wood, *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870-1927* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 2001). For a farther-reaching examination of the state's radical agrarian governor, including his sometimes tense relationship with urban movements, see: Romana Falcón and Soledad García, *La semilla en el surco: Adalberto Tejeda y el radicalismo en Veracruz, 1883-1960* (México: El Colegio de México, 1986).

to exercise authority over such forces as a means of preventing possible abuses. Intriguingly, commenters did not immediately raise the possibilities of applying the decision to the capital. Notably, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario's mouthpiece, *El Nacional Revolucionario*, completely ignored the capital's *veladores* and instead focused on how the decision could be used against rural *guardas blancas* (private security forces used by large landowners and business interests).⁵⁰ However, the court's logic would be replayed by authorities in debates in Mexico City. This was particularly justified by accusations in the press and in internal reports that a number of watchmen and private investigators were known thieves; indeed, one report from 1933 claimed that a group of criminals had formed their own private investigation service in order to steal from customers.⁵¹

The Jefatura de Policía, in particular, was at the fore of growing efforts through the 1930s to bring the city's private police and watchmen under its authority. In part this took place through intervention in internal conflicts. In late 1932, for example, Colonia del Valle's Junta de Vecinos divided over the leadership of the neighborhood's recently-created private police. A number of Junta members accused the force's commandant, Agustín Flores Farías, of corruption and mismanagement, including failing to pay *veladores* despite collecting funds from residents. Despite their objections, the Junta's leadership kept Flores as commandant, leading a number of residents to publicly complain to *El Nacional Revolucionario*.⁵² As a result, Jefe de Policía

⁵⁰ "Las policías particulares son ilegales," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 27 September 1930, 1, 8.

⁵¹ "Sociedad secreta formada por pillos contra rateros," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 20 November 1933, Second Section, 4. See also: "Un detective acusado de grave delito," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 17 August 1934, Second Section, 1, 4; "De acuerdo con la hampa," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 24 August 1934, Second Section, 1, 3. Similarly, an internal investigation into private policing by the Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales from 1935 noted that authorities had earlier sought to exercise oversight because many *veladores* were "rateros conocidos." AGN, Gobernación, DGIPS, Caja 423, Exp. 8.

⁵² "Dificultades en una colonia," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 29 October 1932, Second Section, 1, 3. That the residents went to *El Nacional Revolucionario*, rather than an independent paper with wider readership, perhaps suggests that they were being strategic and sought to communicate more directly with political elites. Mass dailies

Guillermo Palma Moreno proposed bringing del Valle's private police and similar forces around the city under Jefatura oversight, removing local commandants like Flores in the name of public security and ending abuses while still allowing private residents and neighborhood associations to select and pay for veladores, thus allowing for the provision of security without costly expansions in the Policía Preventiva—an important consideration, given the economic recession of the era.⁵³

However, the central point of conflict revolved around the degree of police influence in the veladores' union. Union organization was a crucial arena of politics in the postrevolutionary years, and veladores were no different from other groups in the city.⁵⁴ By the early 1930s, hundreds of the city's private watchmen had come together into what was, by early 1931, referred to as the Unión de Veladores del Comercio y Particulares del Distrito Federal (although the organization's name changed repeatedly over the following years).⁵⁵ Accusations by veladores that union leadership was corrupt, in the pocket of city officials, and counted on only minority support were common. In early 1931, for instance, one member complained in *El Nacional Revolucionario* that the Union's leader, Antonio Morales Domínguez, had acknowledged during an interview with *La Prensa* that he was on the Federal District

seem to have taken little notice of the matter: *Excélsior*, for example, did not write anything about it. On *El Nacional Revolucionario*, see: Piccato, "Notes for a History of the Press in Mexico," 51–52.

⁵³ "Cuerpos de policía privada," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 2 November 1932, Second Section, 1, 3. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the police force barely grew in size after the late 1920s, despite the city's continuing expansion.

⁵⁴ On unions and city politics from the end of the revolution to the start of the 1940s, see: Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, 47–94.

⁵⁵ Diane Davis has stated that the veladores' collective organization was a top-down project by Jefe de Policía Guillermo Palma Moreno begun in 1932, and not complete until 1933. It is clear that some degree of collective organization (as well as efforts at state control) predated Palma's efforts, although the organization became significantly larger by the mid-1930s. In 1931, the Unión de Veladores included over two hundred members; in contrast, by late 1933 there were nearly nine hundred and fifty organized veladores. For Davis's argument, see: Davis, "Policing and Populism," 247n22. On the Unión de Veladores in 1931, see: "La voz del pueblo," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 27 January 1931, 4. On 1933: Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Informe presidencial y memoria del DDF, 1932-1933*, 199.

government's payroll; the velador further complained that Domínguez used his position to imperiously take "discounts" out of veladores' salaries and to replace existing watchmen with his cronies.⁵⁶ Barely a year later, a different faction complained to the same paper that after Domínguez had been re-elected head of the Unión by the majority of the membership, winning over 200 votes, an anti-Domínguez minority of about ninety veladores used procedural tricks to impose its own candidate.⁵⁷ Later that year, veladores again complained that Domínguez, at the head of a faction of forty to fifty veladores who were supposedly paid off by the Jefatura de Policía, had attempted to block an amparo that the Unión had filed to prevent infiltration by the police chief.⁵⁸ In mid-1933, city authorities ordered that veladores be brought under Jefatura oversight, forming the Cuerpo de Veladores Particulares composed of nearly 1,000 watchmen.⁵⁹ Notably, the veladores were allowed to continue to elect their own officers, although police company commandants exercised authority over veladores in their zone. A number of veladores split off or filed complaints over the next months, alleging various abuses: police commandants and their officers confiscated their uniforms, regularly stole items from them, charged them elevated fees for an ostensible mutualist society, and above all claimed the power to collect and distribute their pay, interfering with their traditional direct payment by businesses or residents.

⁵⁶ "La voz del pueblo," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 27 January 1931, 4.

⁵⁷ "Grave escisión en la 'Unión de Veladores,'" *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 1 January 1932.

⁵⁸ "La 'Unión de Veladores' alcanzó plena justicia," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 6 September 1932, 8.

⁵⁹ The Cuerpo's service continued to be granted on the basis of private payments rather than as a fully public service. Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Informe presidencial y memoria del DDF, 1932-1933*, 199. It should be noted that the Cuerpo de Veladores was also at various times referred to as the Cuerpo de Policía Auxiliar, the Cuerpo Auxiliar de la Policía del Distrito Federal, and the Cuerpo de Veladores Particulares y Cuidadores de Automóviles del Distrito Federal. For reasons of clarity, I will refer to the organization as the Cuerpo de Veladores up until the 1941 regulation which formally created the Policía Auxiliar.

Many formed the independent Sindicato de Veladores Unidos del Comercio Particular del Distrito Federal.⁶⁰

Over the next several years, both a minority of watchmen within the Cuerpo de Veladores and the Sindicato (and successor independent unions) struggled with the Jefatura, although the majority of veladores appear to have operated through the Jefatura-controlled organization.⁶¹ By late 1934, the Jefatura sought to increase its control by directly naming Colonel Luis E. Velasco as the head of the Cuerpo de Veladores. Complaining that he kept the majority of the fees paid for their service, many veladores held a hunger strike in the antechambers of the presidential offices, leading to Cárdenas himself ordering that the veladores be allowed to vote for their own commandant. When the plebiscite was held in January of 1935, though, Velasco won, taking around nine hundred votes compared to the seventy to eighty who voted for his opponent, congressional deputy José G. Huerta. Although the press proclaimed it a fair election, a subsequent DGIPS investigation unsurprisingly stated that many veladores believed the vote to have been rigged.⁶² The Sindicato, for its part, not only filed amparo suits and petitioned the president for redress, but also printed and distributed a large number of fliers against Velasco—calling him a “thug,” a “traitor to the working masses,” and a “trafficker of misery,” among other things—and demanding that the Cuerpo de Veladores be dissolved. In turn, the official Cuerpo de Veladores’ union issued its own fliers accusing the head of the Sindicato of corruption, while

⁶⁰ “Se quejan algunos de los veladores del Distrito Federal,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 24 September 1933, Second Section, 6; “Veladores privados que piden amparo,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 8 December 1933, Second Section, 1, 4; “Quejas presentadas por veladores particulares,” *Excélsior*, 8 December 1933, Second Section, 1, 8. The Sindicato went through a series of name changes, although I have decided to refer to it as the Sindicato for consistency.

⁶¹ Sources are clear that only a minority of veladores engaged in open dissidence.

⁶² AGN, Gobernación, DGIPS, Caja 423, Exp. 8; “Hubo democrático plebiscito en el Cuerpo de Policía,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 18 January 1935, 2; “Se design jefe de los veladores particulares,” *Excélsior*, 18 January 1935, Second Section, 6. Notably, *El Nacional Revolucionario* flamboyantly claimed that it was the first time that the police had voted for their own leadership, completely ignoring the veladors’ elections just a few years earlier.

Velasco filed suit against the Sindicato's board for defamation.⁶³ By 1938, the Sindicato had been replaced by a new independent union, which found a place within the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM). However, despite the ostensible protection offered by the CTM, as well as alliances with vendors' organizations and repeated amparo suits, city authorities through the end of the 1930s repeatedly announced their intentions to bring the veladores under complete Jefatura control.⁶⁴ Tensions at times spilled over into violence, as in one bloody fight in Colonia Escandón in 1938 between independent watchmen and members of the Cuerpo de Veladores.⁶⁵

During the lengthy conflict, both sides claimed to be acting in the public interest. As mentioned earlier, police officials regularly claimed that lack of oversight allowed criminals to easily infiltrate the veladores. Dissident veladores made a number of arguments, including that allowing easy entry into the job was a useful means of providing work to members of the working classes suffering under the economic recession.⁶⁶ Perhaps most importantly, they claimed that the push for Jefatura control was driven by police corruption—a conclusion shared by the 1935 DGIPS investigation, which reported that Velasco kept most of the fees paid for the

⁶³ “Se negó el amparo a los veladores,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 24 March 1935, Third Section, 3-4; AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Caja 1400, Exp. Q/021/741 (Letter of complaint, 1935); AGN, Gobernación, DGIPS, Caja 423, Exp. 8; TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2816, Exp. 443943: 1936, Difamación. The defamation case lasted for four years and ended with the leadership of the Sindicato being found guilty (unsurprisingly, given that their main defense was to insist that their accusations against Velasco were correct).

⁶⁴ “Solicitan amparo unos veladores,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 9 January 1938, Third Section, 4; “Protesta de comerciantes,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 11 February, Second Section, 3; “Los veladores van a ser objeto de una reorganización,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 27 March 1938, Second Section, 4; “No más diferencias entre los veladores y vigilantes y la policía de la ciudad,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 16 April 1938, 2; “Amparos de vigilantes y de veladores,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 10 December 1938, Second Section, 2; “Los veladores, la policía, y el reglamento,” *El Nacional Revolucionario* 24 January 1939, Second Section, 2.

⁶⁵ “Heridos graves en una pugna,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 10 December 1938, Second Section, 1, 4.

⁶⁶ This argument was made in multiple letters from 12 August 1936, included in: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2816, Exp. 443943: 1936, Difamación.

watchmen's service and forced veladores to purchase uniforms from him.⁶⁷ They argued that police corruption was such that it would "produce disastrous consequences for public order, betraying revolutionary ideas."⁶⁸ Although they did not go so far as to argue for the complete replacement of the city's police with private forces, they did suggest that they were better suited to maintaining public order if they were independent of the notoriously corrupt public police force. However, the city government's efforts were ultimately justified by the public nature of veladores' work. As a judge explained in 1935, rejecting an amparo request, veladores were largely stationed in the public space of the streets, and their work was practically indistinguishable from that of the *Policía Preventiva*; authorities therefore had an obligation to exercise oversight in the name of the public, and the judge turned down the veladores' appeal to constitutional protections of freedom of work.⁶⁹ The exercise of force in public was seen as too important to be left up to entirely private actors.⁷⁰ However, the underlying logic behind the veladores—that is, that their protection was paid for by private parties, rather than being a fully public service—remained untouched.

This was taken even further in the 1941 *Reglamento del Cuerpo de Veladores Auxiliares de la Policía Preventiva del Distrito Federal*, the first actual regulation issued for the force (and the basis for similar articles establishing a *Policía Auxiliar* included in the wider *Reglamento de*

⁶⁷ The DGIPS report of 27 February 1935 explicitly rejected Velasco's own claims that Jefatura control would prevent abuses, instead emphasizing that his web of graft was threatened by independent veladores. AGN, Gobernación, DGIPS, Caja 423, Exp. 8

⁶⁸ The quote comes from one of the manifestos included in: TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2816, Exp. 443943: 1936, Difamación.

⁶⁹ "Se negó el amparo a los veladores," *El Nacional Revolucionario*, 24 March 1935, Third Section, 3-4.

⁷⁰ For similar justifications, in 1948 authorities created a regulation for private investigators, although as Pablo Piccato has noted, investigators continued to be given a wide berth and often collaborated with the public police. Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 110–11. The regulatory project is included in: AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 571, Exp. 545 22/16.

la *Policía del Distrito Federal* issued later that year).⁷¹ Much of the regulation was given over to establishing the Jefatura's authority over the institution: the Jefe de Policía controlled the naming of officials, the number of veladores, and the hiring process, while veladores' pay was to be organized through an institutional treasury. At the same time, not only was the service to be paid for by residents (specifically through "spontaneous cooperation"), but veladores were specifically enjoined to "attend in the performance of their duties, to the indications that are given to them by the *vecinos* of the sector".⁷² No such requirements were included in ordinary *Policía Preventiva* regulations, suggesting the degree to which the *Policía Auxiliar* (as the veladores increasingly came to be called) was envisioned as operating through particularly close ties with neighborhood residents. Indeed, petitions suggest that, unlike with the *Policía Preventiva*, city residents at times petitioned to the *Policía Auxiliar* to replace unsatisfactory agents with residents' own choice of watchmen, preserving a logic of neighborhood control.⁷³

This logic contrasted with the next major proposal for reforming the *Policía Auxiliar*, which, although never carried out, envisioned a different means of connecting public and private interests. In 1947, *La Crítica* published an article detailing a series of proposed reforms to the police that would, it said, be debated and put into place by the upcoming session of congress.⁷⁴ The paper strongly criticized the *Policía Auxiliar*, directly denouncing by name the long-running

⁷¹ The *Reglamento de la Policía del Distrito Federal* is reprinted in: Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Memoria del Departamento del Distrito Federal del 1o. de septiembre de 1941 al 31 de agosto de 1942* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Penitenciaría, 1942), 140-B.

⁷² Article 9 (on "cooperación espontánea") and Art. 7 fracción II ("Atender en el desempeño de su encargo, las indicaciones que les hagan los vecinos del sector puesto a su cuidado"), in: "Reglamento del Cuerpo de Veladores Auxiliares de la Policía Preventiva del Distrito Federal," *Diario Oficial*, 13 March 1941, 9-10.

⁷³ For example, although only an extract is available, in late June of 1949, residents and car-owners on the Segunda Calle de la Soledad wrote to the president's office to complain that the *Policía Auxiliar* assigned to watch over their vehicles was not attending to his duties. They therefore requested that another man, named Juan Chávez, be hired as a *Policía Auxiliar* and commissioned to replace the negligent agent. AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 755, Exp. 702.2/1720: Extract from 30 June 1949.

⁷⁴ "Desaparece la mal llamada Policía Auxiliar," *La Crítica*, 15 August 1947, 3, 11.

head of the institution, Colonel Leandro Castillo Venegas, for corruption and graft, and referring to the veladores as “this plague of layabouts who believe themselves masters of the city”.⁷⁵ The Jefe de Policía, Jorge A. Grajales, was quoted at length denouncing the Policía Auxiliar, saying that it was full of known criminals who regularly collaborated in burglaries and car theft. Grajales argued for replacing the Policía Auxiliar with a new police force that would be substantially run by the Cámara Nacional de Comercio, based on the existing Policía Bancaria—a corps of special bank guards operated by the Cámara, but under nominal Jefatura control, which was regarded as exceptionally professional and effective.⁷⁶ Notably, Grajales claimed that the reform was inevitable, and *La Crítica* reported that it was widely supported, including by President Alemán.⁷⁷ But the reform proved less inevitable than claimed. Not only was it not even debated in congress, but Grajales was soon replaced, while Castillo—who apparently counted on good political connections, enough that he became a congressional deputy for 1958-1961—remained at the head of the Policía Auxiliar.⁷⁸ Despite its failure, the proposal highlights a conceptual shift. Rather than the private being linked to the public through the neighborhood, it

⁷⁵ Castillo had been the head of the Policía Auxiliar since at least mid-1942; see: “Se efectuó la revistas general de la Policía Auxiliar, ayer,” *El Nacional*, 13 June 1942, 2.

⁷⁶ Details on the founding of the Policía Bancaria are lacking. The 1941 *Reglamento de la Policía del Distrito Federal* stipulated in Article 40 that Jefatura-authorized groups of police organized by banks and businesses would be considered part of the Policía Auxiliar; it is unclear when they became their own separate force. See: *Memoria del DDF, 1941-1942*, 132-B. Grajales was not the only one to sing the praises of the Policía Bancaria. After the infamous serial killer Gregorio “Goyo” Cárdenas escaped from the Castañeda mental institution, he was caught by the Policía Bancaria, leading to criticism of Grajales, who was on vacation at the time in Chiapas, and the Policía Preventiva, which played little part in the arrest. “El momento político,” *Jueves de Excelsior*, 29 January 1948, 7. On Cárdenas, see: Piccato, *A History of Infamy*, 137–42.

⁷⁷ “Desaparece la mal llamada Policía Auxiliar,” *La Crítica*, 15 August 1947, 3, 11. Such complaints were not limited to Grajales. That same year, a reform proposal by the Comité de Orientación Política y Social Pro-Miguel Alemán claimed that a full half of the veladores were *rateros*. AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 571, Exp. 545.22/16: Proposal of 22 April 1947.

⁷⁸ By mid-1948, Grajales had been replaced with Othón León Lobato: “Será creado un Fondo Especial de la Policía Auxiliar del D.F.,” *El Nacional*, 15 June 1948, Second Section, 4. On Castillo as a congressional deputy: Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-2009*, 4th ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 1102. Congressional debate records from the session in question contain no mention of the proposal.

would be linked through business interests, an option that was in line with the growing alliance between economic and political elites as the PRI solidified its rule around industrial development.⁷⁹ However, the plan's failure preserved the *Policía Auxiliar's* neighborhood ties; instead, the *Policía Bancaria* would continue to exemplify this alternative, more business-centric vision of semi-private policing.

Overall, the *Policía Auxiliar* served as a means of formally bringing private logics of protection and security within the public police force, allowing for the extension of public security in the fast-growing city without significantly increasing the police budget, while also seeking through institutional means to foster a closeness between *veladores* and those who hired them. Official reports regularly reinforced that the service of the *Policía Auxiliar* and its predecessors was, as it was put in 1933, “very convenient from all points of view” and a useful means of guaranteeing public order in the face of budget limitations that prevented the *Policía Preventiva* from fully covering the city.⁸⁰ Over the course of the 1930s and beyond, semi-private police came to make up a large portion of the city's overall police force, and patrolled in spaces from the city center, to upper- and middle-class neighborhoods, to working-class neighborhoods and *colonias proletarias*.⁸¹ By 1936, the *Cuerpo de Veladores* was divided into eight

⁷⁹ On economic policy, see: Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, “Introduction: The Paradoxes of Revolution,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 11–12; Gauss, *Made in Mexico*; Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s*.

⁸⁰ Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Informe presidencial y memoria del DDF, 1932-1933*, 199. See also: Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Memoria del DDF, 1941-1942*, 231. Similarly, a 1943 informe from the head of the *Policía Auxiliar* noted “los eficases [sic] servicios públicos normales y extraordinarios que en auxilio y substitución de la *Policía Preventiva* presta esta Corporación.” AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 374, Exp. 417.6/6: Informe of 28 June 1943. The DDF's annual memorias from the 1930s almost invariably mentioned that the public police force was insufficient in size.

⁸¹ The 1935 DGIPS report particularly noted the presence of concentrations of *veladores* in the city center, in wealthy Lomas de Chapultepec, and in middle-class Hipódromo and Santa María la Ribera. AGN, Gobernación, DGIPS, Caja 423, Exp. 8. Court records from the same year indicate that *veladores* were also operating in Magdalena Mixihuca, a working-class area to the city's southeast. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2816, Exp. 443943: 1935, Lesiones. Later sources suggest a similarly wide spread. Advertisements from the midcentury for the new Jardines del Pedregal neighborhood, for example—a wealthy modernist suburb to the south of the city—stressed that the

companies—seven dedicated to nighttime patrolling, and the eighth to watching over parked cars.⁸² In 1940, out of a total of 5,456 police, some 1,300 (23.83%) were veladores, and their proportion was even greater when considered as a portion of street-level gendarmes.⁸³

Public, Private, and Personal: Policing Under the Policía Auxiliar

If the Policía Auxiliar (and its predecessors) served in theory as a means of linking private interest to the public good, matters often appeared more complicated in practice. This was perhaps clearest with the *vigilantes de autos* in commercial zones. In comparison to most veladores, whose work policing neighborhoods and businesses brought them into close contact with their clients, car vigilantes in commercial zones tended to have much more ephemeral relations with their clients. Conflicts revolved around the question of whether vigilantes' protection was a public good or a private service. In late November of 1935, for example, three men—Enrique del Moral, Manuel Carral, and Manuel del Villar—filed a civil suit against the Unión de Vigilantes Auxiliares de la Policía, the official union of the Cuerpo de Veladores.⁸⁴ The night of 12 October, they had parked in front of the Cabaret L'Escargot nightclub, leaving

development would count on “Vigilancia de Policía Privada Uniformada” (almost certainly referring to the Policía Auxiliar). “Fraccionamiento residencial ‘Jardines del Pedregal de Sn. Ángel’,” *Mañana*, 24 September 1949, 49. On Jardines de Pedregal, see: Vitz, *A City on a Lake*, 216–17. In 1956, the sociologist Ezequiel Cornejo's report on Escuadrón 201, a colonia proletaria in the southeast, noted that the neighborhood was regularly policed by just three Policía Auxiliar veladores; however, he stated that the neighborhood was viewed as safe by its residents. Ezequiel Cornejo, “La colonia proletaria Escuadrón 201,” *Estudios Sociológicos*, no. 2 (1956): 178.

⁸² Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Departamento del Distrito Federal. Memoria presentada al H. Congreso de la Unión por el periodo comprendido de septiembre de 1935 a agosto de 1936* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Penitenciaría, 1936), 68.

⁸³ Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Departamento del Distrito Federal. Memoria del 1o. de septiembre de 1939 al 31 de agosto de 1940* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Penitenciaría, 1940), 95; Barrón Cruz, *Policía y seguridad en México*, 191. According to Barrón Cruz, there were in 1940 some 4,453 uniformed police (ignoring the Servicio Secreto, police administrators, and firefighters). The 1,300 veladores thus made up some 29.19% of the uniformed police force.

⁸⁴ All details from this case come from: AGN, TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2804, Exp. 441657: 1935, Demanda promovida [...] contra Unión o Cuerpo de Vigilantes Auxiliares de la Policía.

their car in the care of vigilante José Rodríguez. Upon returning hours later, they found the window smashed, with three hats and a jacket stolen. Rodríguez, they said, claimed that “he had been distracted by the quantity of vehicles he had to attend to,” but took responsibility for the damages suffered, offering to pay for the stolen goods but requesting several days to see if the police could find and return them first. However, after weeks of fruitless inquiries, they still had not received their goods or compensation, and sought compensation from the Unión. Rodríguez argued he had never actually been charged with the car’s security. Instead, he said, the three men had simply shouted “here I am” (*aquí estoy*) as they had left the car, and he had approached it “only out of custom, without having the obligation to look after it.”⁸⁵ Rodríguez further denied having ever taken responsibility for the theft or having offered to pay for the stolen goods. His explanation hinged on an essentially private and commercial explanation of his obligations—as a private vigilante, he had no reason to guarantee security without being paid first. For their part, the plaintiffs brought forth several more witnesses, offering a slightly different story. Elisa Madrid and Carmen Espino, who had visited the cabaret with the group of men, both affirmed the original statement of del Moral, Carral, and del Villar. Notably, Madrid specified not only that the three men had “contracted” for the services of the vigilante, but how they did so: “they told him ‘take care of it’ and nothing more, without making any stipulation, or noting any compensation.”⁸⁶ She also claimed that there would have been no reason to pay him, given that the theft occurred on his watch.

Ultimately, the judge absolved the Unión of having to pay for the stolen goods. In explaining his reasoning, he highlighted the complicated position of the auxiliary police. He

⁸⁵ According to Rodríguez, “sí es cierto que se acercó a ver el coche pero únicamente por costumbre, sin que tuviera la obligación de cuidarlo”.

⁸⁶ “[...] que nada más le dijeron ‘cúdale’, sin hacer estipulación alguna; ni señalarse ninguna remuneración”.

noted that the “supposed contract” by which the plaintiffs believed Rodríguez had been entrusted with the car’s security did not stipulate any form of payment for services. It was therefore, in his eyes, hardly a contract at all. Moreover, the judge argued that, even if there had been no debate over the contract, there were no grounds to sue, as vigilantes de autos occupied a “sui generis position under the law,” with only limited obligations in their protection. Notably, he contrasted their position with that of a legal guarantor rather than with that of the Policía Preventiva, framing the vigilantes as an essentially private rather than public service.

The case thus sheds light on the multifaceted ways that capitalinos perceived the role of auxiliary police, and on the broader unanswered questions about their authority over the public spaces throughout the city they policed. Significantly, del Carral, Villar, and del Moral all accepted the essentially private, contractual nature of the Union’s security. Yet as Elisa Madrid’s testimony made clear, residents acted as though the security provided by private watchmen was nearly a public good to be availed of by anyone parking in the area, perhaps with the assumption of later payment. Vigilantes’ ostensible protection thus complicated notions of public and private; while city authorities championed their service as vital for public security, vigilantes could readily fall back on arguments about the private nature of their service in response to challenges.

The case also suggests how the Policía Auxiliar’s role in car break-ins and theft was more complicated than simply offering protection. Hovering over the case lay the unstated implication that Rodríguez may have allowed the robbery as retaliation for their failure to pay him. Such practices were common enough that, in 1939, the Consejo Consultivo de la Ciudad was forced to

warn vigilantes against enacting reprisals against car owners who did not pay for their services.⁸⁷ The Policía Auxiliar continued to face complaints into the 1940s that they were more likely to assist with car theft and break-ins than to protect against them.⁸⁸ In 1948, with such robberies well-known, authorities announced a special fund to pay for losses suffered while under the Policía Auxiliar's care.⁸⁹ At the same time, other sources suggest that the Policía Auxiliar competed with other public authorities for control over the lucrative car protection market in much the same way that other police forces competed over protection rackets, as discussed in Chapter Four. In 1947, for example, the Jefe de Policía Auxiliar complained that the Secretaría de Bienes Nacionales had seized control of the parking lot in front of the Palacio de Bellas Artes downtown, putting some thirty-six Policía Auxiliar agents out of work.⁹⁰

In contrast to vigilantes de autos in well-trafficked commercial zones in the city, other veladores tended to have more stable relationships with (at least some) of those around them, shaping the uses and abuses of their authority. One night in 1947, after a night of heavy drinking at the home of a military aviator friend of his in Colonia San Juan in Mixcoac, the comerciante Genaro Cervantes Corona asked the nearby Policía Auxiliar Juan Arias Cruz to help him get home. His request likely had less to do with Arias's duties over public order than with interpersonal ties: the two were neighbors, living just a few doors apart in Colonia Daniel Garza

⁸⁷ Departamento del Distrito Federal, *Memoria del Departamento del Distrito Federal, del 1o. de septiembre de 1938 al 31 de agosto de 1939*. (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Penitenciaría, 1939), 207.

The Consejo Consultivo provided for corporate representation within city government after the 1929 centralization; however, its power was quite limited. On the Consejo, see: Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, 67–71 and passim.

⁸⁸ As noted above, this was forcefully and repeatedly stated in “Desaparece la mal llamada Policía Auxiliar,” *La Crítica*, 15 August 1947, 3, 11.

⁸⁹ “Será creado un Fondo Especial de la Policía Auxiliar del D.F.,” *El Nacional*, 15 June 1948, Second Section, 4. The fund is also discussed in more detail in a 1949 informe that reported that it would “asegurar en mejor forma los intereses del público” as well as improve the reputation of the Policía Auxiliar. AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 755, Exp. 702.2/1720: Informe of 25 May 1949 (Transcription of Original from 20 May 1949).

⁹⁰ AGN, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Caja 287, Exp. 419/2: Telegram, 3 June 1947.

in Tacubaya.⁹¹ In any case, Cervantes began arguing with Ariás, who apparently refused to leave his post, and the two began to struggle. Hearing the commotion and thinking Cervantes was being attacked, the military officer came out and fired at least one shot, at which point Ariás fled, dropping his rifle in the process. Notably, in the following court case, the court ruled that it was unproven that Ariás had been acting in the capacity of an agent of public authority. Although the court claimed this was for procedural reasons—namely, Ariás’s status needed to be attested to by other authorities and could not be proven simply by his own testimony—this standard was rarely if ever applied to ordinary gendarmes.⁹² Both in the court’s reasoning, and in Ariás’s probable ties with Cervantes, the case suggests how the *Policía Auxiliar* remained a grey zone mixing public and private logics of power.

Cases show that *veladores* had particularly close ties with established shopkeepers, cantina owners, and restauranteers, who were likely those who paid for *Policía Auxiliar* service.⁹³ One night in November of 1943, for instance, *Policía Auxiliar* number 227, Loreto Garay Islas, was called over by the owner of the *Cervecería El Gallo de Oro* near the Mercado

⁹¹ Given the coincidence, and that, as mentioned earlier, residents at times requested the *Policía Auxiliar* hire specific individuals and assign them to neighborhoods, it is tempting to suggest that Cervantes’s connections had led to Ariás being hired to patrol the street outside the military officer’s home, although this is admittedly speculative.

⁹² TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3933, Exp. 690640: 1947, *Violencias físicas simples contra agentes de autoridad*. It should be noted that the ruling was issued not from the regular court, but rather came from Cervantes’s successful filing of an *amparo*. The court also argued that Cervantes had been too drunk to have meant to offend Ariás and therefore could not be charged with *golpes simples* (as they were classified as offenses against honor and thus could only be punished when inflicted with intent to offend).

⁹³ There are other cases besides that explored above. In 1942, one man claimed that a restauranteer in Colonia Juárez called over a *Policía Auxiliar* to beat him when he contested his bill. Although the man later changed his statement to be in line with the *Policía Auxiliar*’s statement (that he had intervened to keep the man from drunkenly fighting with a group of street children, only for the man to attack him instead), his initial accusation’s credibility derived from perceptions that such a thing was common (as in the case described above), even if it was not necessarily accurate. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3394, Exp. 624224: 1942, *Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones*. Other cases provide more circumstantial evidence. In another case from that year, a *Policía Auxiliar* admitted to having been drinking and gambling on duty in a *cervecería*, perhaps suggesting a degree of complicity with the owner. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3426, Exp. 624511: 1942, *Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones*. In 1944, a *cervecería* owner called in two *Policía Auxiliar* watchmen (rather than gendarmes) to deal with a fight in his establishment. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3541, Exp. 638998: 1944, *Abuso de Autoridad y Robo*.

San Joaquín, a few blocks from where he lived in the working class neighborhood of Colonia Peralvillo. According to Garay, the owner (who he knew by name) asked him to help deal with a customer who refused to pay, only for the customer to refuse and attack him with a knife, slicing Garay's uniform. In contrast, the customer (a butcher named Javier Sánchez Granados) claimed that he had not owed the *cervecería* owner anything, and that Garay had beaten him and threatened him at gunpoint while demanding payment for himself.⁹⁴ As this case and similar ones suggest, *veladores*' close ties with the established *comerciantes* who paid for their services could allow them to serve essentially as private enforcers for them. While similar relations could be formed with ordinary *gendarmes*, as well, the *veladores*' payment by *comerciantes* likely made them an even more accessible and attractive resource, especially given the increasingly coercive character of *comerciantes*' relations with *gendarmes* from the 1930s onward (as discussed in Chapter Four).

At the same time, *veladores* were not necessarily exempt from wider police networks of protection and extortion. In 1947, for instance, the street vendor Epifanio Carbajal López was chatting with a *Policía Auxiliar* near his soup stall in Colonia Doctores when he either suddenly attacked two passing *gendarmes*, according to the police, or the *gendarmes* suddenly attacked him, as he claimed. Notably, although the *Policía Auxiliar* was not directly accused of beating the vendor, he completely backed the *gendarmes*' testimony.⁹⁵ None of the parties involved ever gave any hint of an explanation for what could have provoked the attack, but it is most likely that

⁹⁴ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3474, Exp. 635117: 1943, Daño en Propiedad Ajena, Ataque Peligroso, Contra Agentes de Autoridad. Sánchez claimed that “el cantinero nada cobraba al deponente, pues por sus pistolas el policía auxiliar cobraba.” While Garay unsurprisingly did not say that he had tried to extort the customer, he did claim that Sánchez had asked “a quién quería que le pagara, si al dicente [e.g., the *Policía Auxiliar*] o al cantinero”—in other words, suggesting that Sánchez had mocked the *Policía Auxiliar* as extortionary.

⁹⁵ TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 3962, Exp. 694939: 1947, Ataque Peligroso, Contra Agentes de la Autoridad, Resistencia de Particulares, Portación de Arma Prohibida.

it was related to the patterns of police extortion of vendors discussed in Chapter Four, and that, for whatever reason, everyone involved found it preferable to keep the details out of the courts. The case implies that the *Policía Auxiliar* could be as involved in networks of police corruption as ordinary *gendarmes*. Indeed, most *Policía Auxiliar* who appeared in court records did so as backup to members of the *Policía Preventiva*.⁹⁶

Overall, sources suggest that most *Policía Auxiliar*, on the whole, did have rather closer connections within the neighborhoods they policed than did other police, especially with established merchants and the respectable classes. Despite the instances of purported abuses discussed above, it also must be recognized that the *Policía Auxiliar* appeared in only a minority of court records, and appeared to be accused of abuses at a lower rate than ordinary *gendarmes* and other police.⁹⁷ In aggregate, then the *Policía Auxiliar* functioned not only to enable the wider provision of public security in the growing city by passing the costs on to neighborhood residents and business owners, but also partially—and only partially—reduced police abuses. Nonetheless, their close ties with specific actors at the neighborhood level also fostered many of the same ways of using power that generated complaints against other police forces; moreover, the *Policía Auxiliar*'s ties with residents sat alongside clear patterns of mutual support with the *Policía*

⁹⁶ For example, one *velador* who assisted a *gendarme* in arresting a drunken couple in Colonia Escandón in 1936 backed up the *gendarmes*' testimony against accusations of abuse of authority. TSJDF, S.XX, Caja 2866, Exp. 466053: 1936, Abuso de Autoridad y Lesiones. A *Policía Auxiliar* agent assisted a *gendarme* who faced violent resistance when attempting to make an arrest for public urination to the southeast of the city center in 1945. Ibid., Caja 3634, Exp. 650787: 1945, Ataque Peligroso y Contra Agente de la Autoridad. A *Policía Auxiliar* backed police officials' claims that a drunken, off-duty *gendarme* had been firing in the air, contradicting the *gendarme*'s claims that the accusations were retaliation for his having complained of acts of official corruption. Ibid., Caja 3635, Exp. 650907: 1945, Abuso de Autoridad.

⁹⁷ As mentioned earlier, by the start of the 1940s, *Policía Auxiliar* made up around 20-25% of the police force. Out of fifty-three cases of crimes by or against police from 1942-1947, the *Policía Auxiliar* was involved in some capacity in just 15.10% (8 cases), and were directly accused of wrongdoing or made a similar accusation in just 9.43% (five cases). Of course, this is based on only a small sample, and the findings are not statistically significant. It should also be noted that this sampling ignores cases in the 1930s, given that *veladores*' relationship with the public police were still being worked out; however, *veladores* appear in a smaller number of cases in the 1933-1938 sample.

Preventiva. Finally, despite being brought under the Jefatura's control, the veladores of the Policía Auxiliar continued to occupy a grey zone between public responsibility and private interest.

Conclusion

In May of 1940, the prominent daily *Excélsior* asked three experts—the jurists José Ángel Ceniceros and Francisco González de la Vega, and the writer, politician, and former Inspector General de Policía during the Revolution, Vito Alessio Robles—for their opinion on how to reform the police. As discussed in Chapter Two, Ceniceros and de la Vega highlighted the problem of political corruption. Alessio Robles, however, instead argued that the problem was fundamentally one of police organization. He particularly highlighted the prominent role of the privately-paid veladores as a symptom of institutional disarray, and called for putting more gendarmes on the streets to replace them.⁹⁸ Although his diagnosis was not shared by the other two experts interviewed, Alessio Robles was not alone in his argument. After the establishment of the Policía Auxiliar, newspapers reported with some regularity on residents' complaints that the institution was ineffective; one medical doctor who wrote a complaint in 1952 denounced them as “snazzy and useless” (*flamante e inútil*).⁹⁹

Despite such complaints—which were hardly very different from those directed at other police forces, as discussed in Chapter Two—the Policía Auxiliar remained a crucial component of the city's police force. The institution (and its predecessors) held appeal for multiple actors. For the city government, it reduced costs associated with policing, an especially important

⁹⁸ “Como moralizar la policía,” *Excélsior*, 4 May 1940.

⁹⁹ “¡Ahora es tiempo, Sr. Regente!” *El Universal*, 19 December 1952, 17, 23. See also: “Muchas colonias se hallan abandonadas,” *El Universal*, 29 May 1952, 17, 23; “Veladores Auxiliares,” *Mañana*, 5 September 1953, 14.

consideration amidst the lean budgets of the 1930s. For the city's residents—especially in the middle and professional classes—it provided them with a regularized means of exerting influence over the policing of their neighborhoods, especially important at a time when the regular police force was seen as increasingly predatory (as discussed in the previous Chapter). Yet the *Policía Auxiliar*, and its ostensibly “private” predecessors, should not be seen as wholly separate from the regular police. Rather, they encapsulated many of the same tensions between private and public logics of power and, to a degree, institutionalized them. In doing so, they offered merely the furthest institutional expression of the personalization of police power as a means of negotiating access to police authority. Ultimately, officials' embrace of semi-private policing highlights the degree to which public authority over the fast-growing city was extended through privatized arrangements of power.

Conclusion

Viewed from one perspective, the nineteenth-century shift from residential to professional policing marked a decisive break. No more would direct involvement in the maintenance of public order be the duty of a form of republican citizenship that was largely worked out at the local level of the neighborhood or city block. The legitimacy and efficacy of the police would no longer stem from residential police's local knowledge, social position, and interpersonal connections, but rather from the institution's discipline and professionalism. Of course, the experiences of the subsequent decades did much to highlight that this discipline and professionalism was never quite what was promised, although this was not simply due to the insufficiency of professionalization efforts, as would-be reformers insisted. Instead, the conditions of quotidian police work, combined with the disjunction between expansive laws and common practices that were central to the lives and livelihoods of city residents, meant that police authority was widely personalized in practice. That is, police power was inevitably inscribed in, and often responded to, private logics of power and interpersonal relationships. This depended not only on the everyday practices—the daily negotiation of power through clientelism, corruption, contestation, and simple acts of discretion—that shaped policing, but also was driven home by the creation of the *Policía Auxiliar*, an attempt to regularize and extend already-existing practices that made public order a matter of private power. The result was that professional policing remained strongly shaped by the interpersonal logics that underlay residential policing, but without the explicit connection of the latter between authority over policing and citizenship.

The policing of Mexico City from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century was less a top-down process of state control than a highly situational negotiation of police power by

the city's residents. Capitalinos used a wide variety of tactics to negotiate policing, and the extension of police authority through the capital—especially into private spaces and relations—relied in part on a web of strategic alliances, some ephemeral and others more lasting, between police and residents. Ordinary city residents sought to employ police power in strategic ways, whether to resolve disputes or to enact private vengeance against rivals, while constraining it in other fields. Many capitalinos, especially the vendors who counted on a degree of respectability and resources while also being particularly exposed to police oversight, sought to use personal ties with police to limit regulatory enforcement and thus defend their place in the city. Some, especially the middle and upper classes, also shaped policing by exerting influence over the selection of police personnel; this was particularly prominent in the semi-privatized *Policía Auxiliar* and similar forces in the postrevolutionary years. Capitalinos at all levels sought to play institutions off each other, whether that meant juggling between different police forces (especially the *Policía Preventiva* and the *Policía Judicial*), calling on the police to confront other regulatory inspectors, or employing the police—especially extralegally—to subvert judicial decisions or move around an increasingly slow and unwieldy court system. Although policing was never negotiated on even terrain—city residents varied in their access to resources, vulnerability to violence, and ability to shape policing, while police themselves held a significant degree of autonomous power—these processes of negotiation nevertheless generated their own informal, regularized norms of urban order, based on the selective and strategic application of law, routinized applications of extralegal power, and networks of clientelism. At the same time, these practices often reinforced inequalities of class and gender in terms of exposure to police violence.

Despite clear continuities, though, policing and its negotiation were not static, but rather shifted over time. Institutionally, the police force of 1880 looked quite different in certain regards than that of 1950. For most gendarmes, patrol practices changed only little, technologies like radio-patrol cars had a limited impact, and the scope of police authority continued to be defined by law in exceptionally broad terms that allowed intervention in any number of spaces, fostering discretion and negotiation at the local level between street gendarmes and city residents. But real shifts occurred in other important areas. Over time, and especially as a result of postrevolutionary reforms, policing increasingly moved away from being a temporary job and became a career. More and more, gendarmes stayed on the force for years instead of months; they increasingly received specialized training; and they developed some degree of *esprit d'corps*. None of these developments went as far or were as effective in curbing abuses as reformers wished, yet they did generate changes, albeit not quite those envisioned by reformers. With a greater sense of group loyalty and cohesion, police became more likely to back each other up in court and on the streets, whether that meant turning a blind eye to abuses, inflating threats, or engaging in exemplary violence meant to warn against forceful opposition to police actions. At the same time, the expanding number of police agencies with overlapping or unclear jurisdictions in the post-revolutionary era generated its own set of tensions—police loyalty only sometimes extended beyond the bounds of any particular institution, and different police forces regularly came into conflict. To some extent, this development mitigated against the growing cohesion of police personnel within agencies: savvy capitalinos facing unwanted action from one police department could potentially turn to another for a measure of protection (although such protection only went so far, as discussed in Chapter Four). In doing so, it also fostered the negotiability of policing, while making attaining justice through the police an increasingly

complicated undertaking requiring, at least potentially, the juggling and counterbalancing of multiple institutions.

These institutional changes occurred along with, and helped to shape, a broader set of developments in the negotiation of policing. As court records for abuse of authority and crimes against police make clear, there was a general shift from the Porfiriato to the post-revolutionary decades, with the 1920s in particular as a period of change. In earlier years, the majority of such cases stemmed from disputes over the proper scope of police authority. As discussed in Chapter Three, city residents opposed police intervention with some regularity, not only in isolated, individual acts of resistance to arrest, but also in larger groups, seeking to contain abuses and set limits against police intervention in certain spaces and relationships viewed as private. What was considered abusive often involved not only acts of violence, but the use of violence by the police to apply the law in such spaces and relationships. At the same time, these highly contested ways of negotiating police power sat alongside less obviously conflictive negotiations of police power, based in part on interpersonal relations generated by the conditions of police work and hinging on selective, strategic intervention and discretion.

Although many of these practices continued, by the post-revolutionary years—especially the 1930s and 1940s—a growing number of court cases stemmed from disputes related to corruption and blatantly extralegal uses of police power, whether that meant collecting protection money from vendors, shaking down supposed public order offenders for cash, engaging in harassment on behalf of the well-connected, or attempting to set up informal *arreglos* to resolve disputes extrajudicially. These changes, along with the concurrent solidification of protection rackets discussed in Chapter Four, suggest broader shifts in relationships between the police and the broader public and in the negotiation of policing. Interpersonal relations with the *gendarme*

on the corner continued to be important, but they were increasingly—though never fully—shaped by the directives (legal or otherwise) of higher police officials. Outright challenging the police may well have become more perilous with the growing cohesion of police personnel around the use of violence, and so bribery, while always commonplace, may have gained still more ground as a means of negotiating police authority, at the same time that protection rackets and extortion rings became increasingly regularized and organized. Extralegal dispute resolution, whether through *arreglos* or simple harassment, became more prominent as well in response to the perceived and real problems of the court system. Overall, the negotiation of policing never quite moved away from the local, often interpersonal, level, as *gendarmes*, by the very nature of their work, remained much too inserted in local networks and social relationships for that to occur. But larger-scale corruption and extralegal uses of power became increasingly conspicuous over time, a product not simply of predatory police, but also of the utility of extralegality in mediating disputes of all kinds, and of the baseline degree to which discretion was practically required given the difficulty, if not impossibility, of fully enforcing all laws and regulations. Finally, the negotiability and personalization of policing may have built selective, strategic trust between certain city residents and certain individual police, yet it hardly generated broader institutional legitimacy or trust.¹

Changes in the negotiation of policing impacted the practical meaning of citizenship in multiple ways. Considering citizenship broadly as access to the city—to its plazas, streets, sidewalks, and markets—the negotiability of regulations on public spaces and public activities

¹ For example, surveying rural migrants to Mexico City in the early 1970s on their attitudes about the government, Wayne Cornelius found them to be particularly critical of the provision of police service, and to especially distrust that the police would treat the poor fairly. Wayne A. Cornelius, *Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 59–60.

allowed access by a wide range of capitalinos, well beyond that imagined in the letter of the law, conditioned on police favor and protection. Yet the financial and physical costs of protection—the bribes paid, the beatings threatened or endured to enforce extortion—likely became increasingly solidified over time with the growing regularization of protection rackets. Considering citizenship as the right to access public services, it is clear that few in Mexico City saw the police in such a light. The rhetoric of publicness gave capitalinos, including in working-class neighborhoods, a useful tool to petition for improved security. But the practical demands of police work (particularly the need for local knowledge) as well as police practices (which brought gendarmes into close and, often, sustained contact with those they policed) invariably worked to render it subject to private logics of power. Although widely recognized, and even promoted by city authorities and residents through the semi-private police institutions of the postrevolutionary years, the privatization of police power also worked to delegitimize the police as an institution, as well as the broader criminal justice system. Finally, the degree to which discretionary violence—especially extralegal violence—served as a crucial ingredient in negotiation and in informal dispute resolution clearly helped entrench the violation of basic constitutional protections in the practices of policing, in ways that fell particularly heavily on lower- and working-class men and, often, women.

Many of the practices discussed in this dissertation continued well past 1950, although a full discussion of their interconnections with wider political and social developments is beyond the scope of this conclusion.² Police officials were regularly implicated in networks of extortion

² For example, Ernesto P. Uruchurtu, city regent from 1952 to 1966, aggressively sought to crack down on street vending. His efforts, which met with some success during his time in office, depended in part on harsher policing, but more important was the construction of a large number of new markets intended to regularize street vendors. John C. Cross notes that Uruchurtu's initial attempts to simply outlaw street vending met with a massive backlash from vendors themselves—who by this time were well-organized—forcing him to compromise and allow

and protection, which occasionally bubbled to the surface in major scandals, as when police chief Arturo “El Negro” Durazo was arrested in 1984 and found guilty of wide-ranging corruption.³ Lower-level bribery remained widespread, police violence was common, and city residents regularly contested police authority.⁴ These trends persisted despite political democratization and a seemingly-intensive series of police reforms at the national and local level from the late 1990s onward.⁵ Faced with the apparent failure of these reforms to appreciably improve public trust in the police, many observers pointed to the difficulty of changing entrenched practices like widespread corruption, abuses, extralegality, and the negotiability of power—practices that, as this dissertation has argued, were foundational to the ordering of the city.⁶ Moreover, while some have argued that fostering ties between the police and the wider public is necessary to build institutional trust and legitimacy, these ties have themselves long played a role in generating police abuses.⁷ As this dissertation suggests, the problems of policing in Mexico City are not

vending in most parts of the city while new markets were constructed. Despite what Cross describes as the qualified success of this plan, it was not continued by subsequent administrations. Cross, *Informal Politics*, 160–87, esp. 163–64.

³ For a recent discussion of the Durazo case that emphasizes the role of the public sphere and its limits in obtaining justice, see: Vanessa Freije, *Citizens of Scandal: Journalism, Secrecy, and the Politics of Reckoning in Mexico* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020), 107–37.

⁴ Piccato, “A Historical Perspective on Crime,” esp. 71–77.

⁵ Within Mexico City, both the PRI and the PRD sought to improve policing in response to rising fears of insecurity in the late 1990s with little success. During the early 2000s, PRD city authorities increasingly attempted to implement police reforms drawing on external models—notably, former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani made a series of highly-publicized visits to the capital with his consulting firm to promote the “Broken Windows” model and “community policing”—in an effort to remake the city center, especially, and make it attractive to international business and tourism. Wider institutional reforms followed. On reforms in Mexico City, see: Niels Uildriks, “Policing Insecurity and Police Reform in Mexico City and Beyond,” in *Policing Insecurity: Police Reform, Security, and Human Rights in Latin America*, ed. Niels Uildriks (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2009), 198–204; Markus-Michael Müller, *Public Security in the Negotiated State: Policing in Latin America and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 140–42; Müller, *The Punitive City*, 21–29; Davis, “Policing and Regime Transition,” 83–90. On institutional reforms at the national level, with a focus on how they impacted municipal policing in Mexico’s northwest, see: Sabet, *Police Reform in Mexico*, esp. 188–207.

⁶ On abuses, corruption, and widespread distrust, see, for example: Azaola Garrido, *Imagen y autoimagen de la policía*; Azaola Garrido, *Investigadores de papel*; Arturo Alvarado Mendoza, *El tamaño del infierno: un estudio sobre la criminalidad en la Zona Metropolitana de la Ciudad de México* (México: El Colegio de México, 2014), esp. 287–318.

⁷ Notably, for instance, Niels Uildriks has criticized traditional models of community policing as inapplicable to Mexico City given widespread distrust of the police, and instead has argued for “*the personalization*

only long-established, but are inextricable from the negotiability of power that has proven so central to the making of urban order. At the same time, police abuses and corruption are not unchanging constants, but themselves have a history.

Ultimately, this dissertation has tried to shed light on how Mexico City's residents found ways of living with the presence—threatening, promising, and often both at once—of state authority embodied at the local level in the figure of the gendarme. As it shows, police power was substantially negotiable in ways that shaped public order, citizenship, and the experience of urban life in multiple registers. Negotiation gave many residents the ability to defend their livelihoods and to bring police power to bear in their own disputes. However, it was a double-edged sword, reinforcing inequalities of class and gender in exposure to police violence and integration into the city. Moreover, these practices shifted over time with institutional, legal, and social changes. The growing complexity of the judicial system fueled increased demands for extralegal dispute resolution, while the police themselves became increasingly organized and cohesive as a force over time, fueling the entrenchment and extension of ever-more organized uses of corruption and extrajudicial force. Meanwhile, increasing pressures for regulatory enforcement, combined with changes in vending and in police organization, shifted the provision of police protection from an individually-worked-out arrangement into more hierarchical protection rackets. Concurrently, authorities' inability to expand policing to keep up with the city's growth led to institutional arrangements that privatized security to a surprising extent.

of police-public relations by making individual officers responsible for the safety of particular streets, or groups of streets" [italics in original] as a means of generating trust, legitimacy, and efficacy. Uildriks, "Policing Insecurity and Police Reform," 211–12. In contrast, Markus-Michael Müller has shown that policing in the present (as in the past, as this dissertation shows) is already pervaded by the personalization of police power by city residents through extralegal arreglos, bribery, and selective uses of police authority. Therefore, he argues, reforms that seek to promote closeness between the police and the policed are unlikely to combat abuses or corruption. Müller, "Addressing an Ambivalent Relationship"; Müller, *The Punitive City*, esp. 125-131, 142.

Citizenship—whether considered as access to the city and its resources, as the ability to shape policing and hence urban governance, or as protection from state violence—was less universalized than dependent on forms of police favor that were often highly fragile and dependent on violence. In short, the conflictive negotiation of policing was crucial to working out the practical value of, and limits on, citizenship in Mexico City.

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