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SUPERVISOR: DANNY RAYMOND

MEXICANS IN DENMARK:  
MOTIVATIONS TO LEAVE MEXICO, CONNECTIONS TO  
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND SETTLEMENT IN HOST  
COUNTRY

ELISELDA VEGA ESTRADA  
20211455

POLA STARZYŃSKA  
20211452

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to shed light on the Mexican diaspora living in Denmark, which is relatively small compared to other countries. The study seeks to understand the reasons behind their decision to leave Mexico and settle in Copenhagen, as well as explore their connections to their homeland and their ability to integrate into Danish society. Using semi-structured interviews, hermeneutics and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the study identifies patterns and develops a theoretical framework that encompasses concepts such as transnationalism, security, fear of crime, social identity, and diaspora. The paper includes the Mexican contemporary context where citizens experience lack of security and ongoing violence in the country. Moreover, our background information is complemented by Mexican demographics in Denmark provided by the Mexican embassy in Denmark. The study is crucial in gaining a deeper understanding of this specific scope, given the limited existing research on Mexicans who migrate to Europe, particularly to Denmark.

Key words: Mexicans in Denmark, Sense of identity, Fear of crime, Ontological security, Mexican diaspora, Diaspora in Denmark.

## INTRODUCTION

Mexico, as one of the largest countries in the world, is home to a significant population that not only resides within its borders but also migrates abroad, particularly to the United States. According to The Institute for Mexicans Abroad report in 2015, nearly 12 million Mexicans live outside their homeland, with approximately 97% of them residing in the USA. While a majority of Mexican diaspora settles in the United States, there is also a notable presence in European countries, with around 100,000 Mexicans residing there (Gobierno de México, 2015). Spain, with 61,000 Mexicans, and Germany, with 20,000, have the largest Mexican diaspora populations in Europe, according to the Migration Policy Institute (Batalova & Rosenbloom, 2022).

In comparison to other countries, the Mexican diaspora in Denmark is relatively small. The Mexican Embassy in Denmark provides statistics indicating that approximately 3,000 Mexicans currently reside there (Appendix B). The majority of these individuals are concentrated in Copenhagen and its surrounding areas. However, some Mexicans in Denmark also hold European passports, primarily of Spanish and Italian origin, which allows them to stay in the country under EU rules. This relatively straightforward process provides numerous benefits for individuals with European heritage. Research by García and Bailey (2018) suggests that Mexicans settled in European countries, in most cases, come from privileged backgrounds and have higher levels of education. Furthermore, studies conducted by Lara-Guerrero (2021) and Plascencia (2020) indicate that Mexicans who participate in diaspora activities and pursue further education in Europe often hold bachelor's degrees.

Mexico has been widely recognized as one of the most perilous nations globally. Since the initiation of the War on Drugs by President Calderón in 2006, numerous human rights organizations have reported widespread misconduct by the police and military, including extrajudicial killings and torture. The country has also experienced a rise in violent personal incidents such as kidnappings and disappearances. These factors act as push factors, compelling many Mexicans to leave their homeland. Additionally, the allure of a better quality of life and greater opportunities draws them to settle in European countries like Denmark.

While the largest Mexican diaspora resides in the United States as mentioned earlier, there is a lack of scientific research specifically focusing on the Mexican diaspora living in Europe, especially in Denmark. This paper aims to address this gap and shed light on Mexican migrants and their migration experiences. It seeks to understand the reasons behind their decision to leave Mexico and settle in Denmark, as well as explore their connections to their homeland. It is crucial to gain insight into why this particular group decided to move far away from home and what factors contribute to their decision to stay in Denmark. Furthermore, the study aims to explore the concept of diaspora and how Mexicans navigate their identities while living between two countries.

Our research employs semi-structured interviews as the core method to gather data from Mexicans living in Denmark. Using an inductive approach with a hermeneutic lens, we employ Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze the interview responses. This research approach has allowed us to identify patterns and develop a theoretical framework that encompasses concepts such as transnationalism, security with a focus on ontological security theory, fear of crime, social identity, and diaspora.

Additionally, this paper provides an introduction to Mexicans living in Denmark, highlighting the size of the diaspora in the country and discussing the characteristics of its members. To provide a better understanding of the participants' experiences, we will present the context of present-day Mexico, including the push factors of violence and lack of safety in the region. Reyes Romo (2008) and his definition of transnationalism contend that the historical encounters, cultural legacies, and social systems of the host nation influence the migrants' sense of self and group identity. For understanding their reasons for moving and the methods they use to settle in a new country, it is essential to understand their background.

### RESEARCH QUESTION

This study primarily examines the Mexican diaspora residing in Denmark. Given the limited existing research on Mexicans who migrate to Europe, particularly to Denmark, we deem it crucial to gain a deeper understanding of this specific scope. We have decided to divide the analysis into 3 parts. First part will investigate the research question : *Why do Mexicans decide to leave their homeland and migrate to Denmark?* The second part will be focused on the question: *how do they keep and perceive their further connection to Mexico?* and we will

end the analytical chapter with answering: *how do they understand and perceive their integration into Danish society and/or their ability to settle in Denmark?*

## METHODOLOGY

This research is based on 7 interviews with Mexicans living in Copenhagen, Denmark. The participants are 4 women and 3 men in ages between 27 and 54 years old. While doing our research, participants were chosen according to the following criteria: people who come to Copenhagen to work, to study and because their partner was living there. Moreover, we wanted to include in our research men and women, because we would like to see if there are differences in experiences and thoughts because of the gender. As a result, 2 of them came to study, 3 of them came because of job opportunities and 2 participants came to live with their significant other. In addition, our goal was to find interviewees who lived in Copenhagen for a shorter period (couple years) or more than 15 years. The interviews were conducted between February and March 2023 and they were made by following the interview guide and additional questions. The people were chosen based on personal connections due to the fact that one of us is Mexican and has friends and colleagues amongst the Mexican diaspora.

Social constructivism is an epistemological approach that suggests that reality is socially constructed and that individuals make sense of their experiences based on their social, cultural, and historical contexts. In our study using IPA, we will employ a phenomenological approach to understand how individuals in the Mexican diaspora in Denmark construct their sense of identity and belonging. Our methodology will involve semi-structured interviews, which will allow us to explore the participants' unique experiences and perspectives, while also recognizing the social and cultural factors that shape their understanding of their identities. Through this inductive approach, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of diaspora identity and the role of social construction in shaping these experiences.

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

We chose to use semi-structured interviews because they offer a balance between the flexibility of an open-ended interview and the structure of a structured interview. This type of interview allows us to have a set of predetermined questions, while also allowing the participant to elaborate on their responses and share information that may not have been covered in the initial set of questions. Moreover, this type of interview lets us explore the research question in detail and to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's perspectives, experiences, and attitudes.

Semi-structured interviews (SSI) are used to get people's personal perspectives about a specific situation or experience they have had that can be a case that we can research. In our research we focus on the Mexican diaspora, their social identity, sense of belonging and their relationship with Mexico as homeland and Denmark as host country. The interviews use a detailed guide or schedule and are used when there is enough information about the experience from an objective standpoint, but not enough information about people's personal perspectives (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are commonly used by researchers to get a thorough understanding of a person's beliefs, perceptions, or experiences related to a specific topic. This method provides more flexibility than structured interviews, questionnaires, or surveys, allowing the researcher to explore interesting points that arise during the interview and enabling the respondent to provide a more complete picture (Smith, 2012). During our interviews we followed our interview guide that contained questions that gave our interlocutors space to expand their answers and from that point we could ask deeper questions that let us understand their experiences better.

The contemporary semi-structured interview (SSI) has its roots in the "focused interview" developed by Robert Merton and Patricia Kendall in 1946. The focused interview was initially designed to interpret the effects of mass communications and to provide a basis for interpreting statistically significant effects. The role of the focused interview was to specify the effective stimulus, interpret discrepancies between anticipated and actual effects, interpret discrepancies between prevailing effects and effects among subgroups, and interpret processes involved in experimentally induced effects. These original roles of the focused interview served as the basis for the development of contemporary types of SSIs (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Considering the interview questions are predicated on prior knowledge, the use of

semi-structured interviews necessitates a certain level of background knowledge in the research topic area. Prior to the interview, the questions are chosen and created utilizing the interview guide. The primary subjects of the study are covered in the interview guide. Although it provides a focused framework for the conversation during the interviews, it shouldn't be rigorously adhered to. Instead, the goal is to learn more about the study topic by gathering similar information from each participant and giving them suggestions for topics to discuss (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Moreover, we gave participants open-up questions about their lives in Denmark and Mexico so they might say something we as researchers might not know or expect that can turn out to be crucial and valuable for our research.

The Semi-Structured Interview (SSI) can be analyzed by comparing the responses of participants to each question. The same questions are asked in the same order to every participant, resulting in data that can be quantified and turned into numerical data. While SSIs can be used in combination with other data collection methods, the unique insights gained from SSIs cannot be obtained through participant observation, structured questionnaires, or literature review. Furthermore, unstructured interviews are not able to yield the same type of data as SSIs because the latter is focused on specific areas of inquiry, while unstructured interviews do not guide the participant's response (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

The important aspect of semi-structured interviews is the interview guide. A collection of questions is used to steer the talk during an interview toward the study's topic. Both the interview process and the following analysis of the gathered data are significantly impacted by the quality of the interview guide. It is customary for semi-structured interview guides to be free and flexible so that the interview can flow naturally, the sequence of the questions can be changed, and it is simple to shift from one question to the next. The guide's questions are written with the intention of eliciting rich data, with a focus on being participant-oriented, non-leading, and concise (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The pilot interview, which is the initial stage of the procedure, is used to test the semi-structured interview guide. This phase's goals are to make sure the preliminary guide's information is accurate and pertinent to the research, as well as to look for any questions that could need to be rephrased or altered. Researchers can make educated adjustments and raise the caliber of data collected by testing the interview guide. Testing the guide can also improve the evaluation of research ethics, provide useful information on research integrity, and assist



researchers in doing data collecting more efficiently (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

When both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used together, semi-structured interviews (SSIs) are the most commonly used qualitative method. As a result, any study that uses SSIs can be seen as a mixed-method design, as the data collected through the interviews can be analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The data can be converted from textual data to numerical data, allowing for both types of analysis to be conducted (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). In our research, we have decided to use SSI, but also combine it with different qualitative methods, like hermeneutics and furthermore, IPA. McIntosh & Morse propose a framework for analyzing diversity in the data collected from such interviews, which includes categorizing responses into thematic areas, identifying patterns and relationships within the data, and considering the context in which the interviews were conducted (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). After transcribing our interviews, we made a list of themes that were the most common and the most mentioned by our interlocutors. In result we came up with patterns: security, freedom, opportunities, family, home, citizenship and politics. According to the authors it's valuable to emphasize the importance of reflexivity in the analysis process, encouraging researchers to be aware of their own biases and assumptions when interpreting the data. They also highlight the need for researchers to consider the implications of their findings for broader social issues related to diversity and social justice (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

#### INDUCTIVE STUDY

We have opted for the inductive approach as we think that the research topic, which involves diaspora, their sense of identity and belonging, is intricate and multifaceted. Therefore, we require a versatile and adaptable method of data collection and analysis that enables us to examine emerging patterns and themes. It is valuable to listen to the stories of participants of our research, find patterns and then find theories that can explain their answers and make us understand them better (Zalaghi and Khazaei, 2016).

The main aim of using the inductive approach in research is to enable the identification of key patterns or themes that are present in the raw data. Unlike structured methodologies, this approach does not restrict the emergence of important themes. Conventional deductive data

analysis methods, such as those used in experimental and hypothesis testing research, can limit the identification of significant themes because they are influenced by preconceptions in data collection and analysis procedures. Hence, the inductive approach allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the data, without being constrained by predetermined hypotheses or assumptions (Thomas, 2003). The inductive method states that theories are developed at the conclusion of study and as a result of observations. The inductive method entails searching for patterns in the observations and creating hypotheses to explain those patterns. The researcher has complete freedom to choose the direction of the investigation in inductive research because no theory is used at the outset (Zalaghi and Khazaei, 2016). Before interviewing our participants we expected that one of the theories we would like to use in our research is diaspora because we focus in this paper on Mexicans living in Denmark. However, while doing the semi-structured interviews and finding patterns, we have decided to include in our theoretical framework - security, transnationalism and social identity.

An inductive study aims to create a model or theory that explains the structure of experiences or processes found in the raw data. This is achieved by condensing the raw text data into a brief summary format and establishing clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings. It is crucial to ensure that these links are transparent and defensible (Thomas, 2003).

The flexible inductive technique enables researchers to create theories and models based on the unprocessed data. This method enables researchers to maintain an open mind and thoroughly examine the facts without any prejudices. Additionally, the inductive technique emphasizes in-depth data exploration, which can produce extensive and detailed knowledge about the research topic. This approach can give a thorough grasp of the topic under study. The inductive technique can also be helpful in accounting research because it allows for a thorough examination of actual events and practices. With this approach, significant concerns that may not have been previously taken into account can be found and addressed (Zalaghi and Khazaei, 2016).

On the other hand, one of the main disadvantages of the inductive approach is that it can be time-consuming, because this method requires a careful analysis of large amounts of data. Furthermore, it focuses on exploring specific cases in depth, which can limit the generalizability of the research findings to other contexts or situations (Zalaghi and Khazaei, 2016). With the amount of time we had to write this paper, we decided to base our research

on only 7 interviews and underline the fact that our findings can be used as a sample of Mexican diaspora representation, rather than generality.

## HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is a valuable method for studying diaspora because it provides a framework for understanding the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity. By analyzing the ways in which individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences, hermeneutics can provide insights into the ways in which culture and identity are constructed and negotiated in diasporic contexts. Moreover, hermeneutic analysis is particularly well-suited to studying the experiences of individuals who are living between two or more cultures, as it allows for a nuanced understanding of the ways in which individuals navigate the complexities of multiple cultural contexts. Hermeneutics is a great method in qualitative study to analyze diaspora, because it makes it easier to understand people who live in between their homeland and their host country, in our case Mexicans who live in Denmark.

Hermeneutics and phenomenology are often used interchangeably, but it's important to clarify their relationship. Phenomenology aims to understand the meanings of human experiences by analyzing their descriptions, while hermeneutics posits that language is central to how people perceive the world and gain knowledge. In contrast, phenomenology focuses on people's lived experiences and seeks to identify shared meanings and similarities (Dowling, 2004).

According to Dowling, there are three schools of phenomenological approach: descriptive phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, existential phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology focuses on the description of phenomena as they are experienced, without any prior assumptions or theories. It involves the use of "bracketing," which means setting aside preconceptions and biases to attend to the phenomena itself (Dowling, 2004). Hermeneutic phenomenology emphasizes the interpretation of lived experiences, and seeks to understand the meanings and contexts that shape these experiences. It involves a dialectical process of understanding and interpretation, where the researcher engages in a dialogue with the text to uncover its underlying meaning (Dowling, 2004). Existential phenomenology is concerned with the existential aspects of human experience, such as freedom, choice, and responsibility. It seeks to explore the ways in which individuals make sense of their experiences and construct their own identities in relation to their social and cultural contexts.

It involves a focus on the individual's unique perspective and lived experience (Dowling, 2004).

'Hermeneutics' is another name for interpretive phenomenology. The term hermeneutics first appeared in the 17th century as a technique for illuminating the meaning of biblical and classical literary interpretation. Hermeneutics' two tenets are that language is both a means of understanding and a means of knowledge for humans, who experience the world through it (Dowling, 2004).

Dowling (2004) outlines three branches of hermeneutic theory within hermeneutic philosophy. Gadamerian hermeneutics emphasizes the importance of the interpreter's pre-understanding and subjectivity in the process of interpretation. It involves a dialogical process of understanding, where the interpreter engages in a conversation with the text to uncover its underlying meaning. Gadamerian hermeneutics is characterized by the concepts of "fusion of horizons" and "hermeneutic circle" (Dowling, 2004). Objective hermeneutics seeks to develop a method of interpretation that is objective, scientific, and free from personal biases. It involves the use of formal procedures to interpret texts, such as linguistic analysis and logical deduction (Dowling, 2004). Critical hermeneutics seeks to uncover the social, cultural, and political dimensions of interpretation. It is concerned with power relations and the ways in which interpretation can be used to reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies. Critical hermeneutics involves a reflexive and critical analysis of the interpretive process itself, and seeks to uncover the underlying assumptions and biases that inform interpretation (Dowling, 2004).

## IPA

As diaspora involves the experience of migration and displacement, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) can provide an in-depth understanding of the ways in which individuals make sense of these experiences and negotiate their identities within a new cultural context. IPA is particularly useful for examining the subjective meanings and interpretations that individuals give to their experiences, which can shed light on the complexity and diversity of diasporic identities. Additionally, IPA is flexible and adaptable,

allowing researchers to use it in a range of research contexts and to tailor the method to suit the needs and aims of their specific research project.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was created by Jonathan Smith, a British health psychologist who aimed to develop a pluralistic qualitative approach in contrast to reductionist methods. It is rooted in traditional phenomenology, which seeks to understand the ways participants give meaning to their experiences by examining overlooked aspects of lived experience (Miller, Chan, & Farmer, 2018). The works of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, which approach people as embodied beings situated in a particular historical, social, and cultural context, with a focus on the phenomenological and existential aspects, have also influenced the IPA approach (Shinebourne, 2011).

Experimental psychology gave rise to IPA, which is still evolving as a methodological strategy for qualitative research. Its main objective is to collect detailed accounts of people's perspectives and the ways in which they interpret their experiences (Klein & Milner, 2019). IPA is a qualitative, experiential, and psychological research approach that draws on three key areas of knowledge philosophy, namely phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. These theoretical perspectives guide IPA in the development of its own epistemological framework and research methodology (Shinebourne, 2011). Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie argue that the usefulness of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in mixed-method research should not be disregarded. To address concerns about validity and generalizability, researchers may use a deductive technique to organize the data before applying an inductive IPA approach to extract case-specific insights. Overall, scholars and academics from various philosophical traditions and research paradigms are recognizing the potential of IPA's adaptable and insightful data collection procedures (Klein & Milner, 2019). In our research, we focus on specific cases of Mexican diaspora so this way IPA is a useful method in this paper.

IPA questions are different from conventional phenomenological research questions in that they frequently focus on the how rather than the what of a particular experience (Miller, Chan, & Farmer, 2018). All IPA studies have a common analytical focus, which is to identify patterns in participants' experiences, interpret them within social and theoretical contexts, and consider the ways in which participants make sense of those experiences. However, there is no fixed method for conducting data analysis within the IPA framework. To reflect the

idiographic nature of the IPA, each instance is closely examined for themes before exploring patterns across examples (Miller, Chan, & Farmer, 2018).

The IPA approach, also called double-hermeneutics, allows the researcher to interpret the participant's interpretation of their experiences. This may introduce researcher bias and compromise the validity of the results. However, some scholars argue that the involvement and reflection of the researcher's own preconceptions (bracketing) is a crucial element of the IPA process (Klein & Milner, 2019). The challenge of going beyond the most basic descriptive level of analysis is one that is frequently explored in literature describing and criticizing IPA research. The approach differs from several other qualitative methodologies since it applies different degrees of interpretation during the IPA analysis process. Nevertheless, IPA researchers still occasionally have trouble using a pertinent and contextualized interpretive lens during data analysis, leading to shallow studies (Miller, Chan, & Farmer, 2018).

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Science is a product of human beings, and their presence is necessary for the creation of ideas, assumptions, theories, and formulas. Patton argues that subjectivity is both the strength and weakness of qualitative research because it is a necessary component for innovation in science and social science (Diefenbach, 2008).

For this paper, the primary data that was used are semi-structured interviews with Mexican immigrants living in Copenhagen. All the interviewees were informed how the interviews will be used and what is their reason, everybody has given us allowance to use their words in our thesis and record the conversations that were later transcribed. We have decided to keep our interlocutors anonymous, so we use the first letter of their names instead of full names. Most of the participants that gave us their stories are friends or acquaintances of one of us, who is also part of the Mexican diaspora herself. It can be an advantage but also disadvantage of this kind of paper. As friends, there may already be a level of trust and rapport established between the researcher and participant, making it easier to open up and discuss sensitive or personal topics. Furthermore, if the research topic involves a particular language or culture, friends who are native speakers or have cultural knowledge can provide valuable information

and context. On the other hand, interviewing friends can lead to biased data as they may be more likely to tell the researcher what they think they want to hear. Participants who are familiar with the interviewer may be less critical or less likely to challenge the researcher's assumptions or interpretations, which could affect the validity of the research. Finally, relying solely on friends as participants may limit the sample size and representativeness of the findings, which could affect the generalizability of the research.

Our paper was created during a period of four months in total so our time for finding participants amongst the Mexican diaspora and interviewing them was time-limited. This way, the choice of the interlocutors for our thesis was limited by the time and network we had. Moreover, it is initial to mention that the choice of our interviewees shows just the samples of Mexicans in Denmark and it's just a small representation of this community, their thoughts and experiences and it is not generality. We are able to compare our samples to other articles that focus on the Mexican diaspora but we can not take it as a whole representation of the Mexican community in Denmark.

However, it is true that qualitative research and the social sciences are more susceptible to any potential harmful effects of subjectivity. This is mostly because social sciences deal with topics that are relevant to the researcher's personal experiences and everyday life. The researcher is in some way affected by the subjects he or she researches, at least conceptually and frequently practically and emotionally (Diefenbach, 2008).

## THEORY

The theory chapter of this master's thesis discusses the importance of highlighting transnationalism, security, with a focus on the concepts of ontological security and fear of crime, sense of identity, and diaspora. In order to navigate our research we split our research question into two different areas: First and foremost, why did the Mexican diaspora decide to leave their home country and move to Copenhagen, that is the reason behind our interest for ontological security, and fear of crime. Secondly, how do they perceive their further connection to their homeland and that is where transnationalism, sense of identity and diaspora come in handy for our research.

Transnationalism involves the formation of migratory enclaves associated with networks that foster connections between regions of emigration and immigration. Sense of identity is a theory explained by Jenkins and it relates to the process of identity of a person, stating that someone's identity is never done and it is always developing according to the context and circumstances. Whereas diaspora, as a term, submits to the people who are living in a different country than the place of origin and according to Burgess (2020), they have to live up to some requirements. These previous concepts are relevant to our research given that our participants are living two different cultures at the same time, the Mexican and the Danish, some of them because they are married to a Dane and have Danish children, but others simply because they are trying to bring their Mexican lifestyle to Denmark, specifically Copenhagen.

On the other hand, ontological security is a concept that describes an individual's sense of confidence and trust in their environment and social relationships. Fear of crime is a common problem affecting citizens in many countries, and it has been shown that perceived risk has a stronger influence on the citizens being afraid than the actual crime rate. This chapter examines the impact of transnationalism on migrants' ontological security and fear of crime, drawing on relevant literature to explore the theoretical concepts.

### TRANSNATIONALISM

According to Reyes Romo (2008) the restrictive concept of nation has allowed for social and national exclusion of all those who do not belong to the same territory, speak the same language, and practice the same culture. The author argues that transnationalism is a concept that refers to the relationships between citizens who reside outside their original national territory, “without fully assimilating into the host society, practices that give rise to new memberships and loyalties, claiming rights in both”.

The formation of migratory enclaves associated with networks has given rise to the concept of "transnational social space." This analytical position recognizes the nature of the links that are established between the worlds of migrants and those who remain in the country of origin, as well as the institutions that connect them across borders. (Reyes Romo, 2008)



The transnational social space is facilitated and articulated by maintaining multiple political, family, economic, social, religious, and cultural connections at the same time. With these "social networks," migrants establish and maintain relationships at different levels and social spheres that link them to both their societies of origin and to those of settlement. These relationships not only involve those who do not return to their society but also link those who stayed in the original communities, affecting to a greater or lesser extent the routine social, economic, political, and cultural life of the communities of origin. (Reyes Romo, 2008)

Assimilation is the process by which two different cultural groups mix or merge, adopting the culture and social institutions of the other. Richard Alba has coined different types of assimilation. For example, he has proposed the concept of "socioeconomic assimilation," when referring to the mobility capacity of minority groups and, above all, to the participation of these groups in the same circumstances as the native groups, within institutions such as the labor market and education. However, complete "socioeconomic assimilation" is not always possible, and these labor immigrants go through a process of "segmented assimilation, in which they usually end up in the worst levels within the stratification order of society, getting used to that condition to remain in their jobs." (Reyes Romo, 2008)

In summary, transnationalism involves the formation of migratory enclaves associated with networks that foster a much broader understanding of the connections between regions of emigration and immigration. The transnational social space facilitates and articulates the movement of people, goods, ideas, and information across borders, and it affects both the societies of origin and settlement. Assimilation, on the other hand, is the process by which different cultural groups mix or merge, but it may not always be possible, and labor immigrants may go through a process of "segmented assimilation" where they end up in the worst levels within the stratification order of society. (Reyes Romo, 2008)

In conclusion, the exploration of transnationalism, security, social identity, and diaspora provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the experiences of Mexicans living in Copenhagen. Transnationalism highlights the complex relationships between migrants and their home and host societies, emphasizing the formation of migratory enclaves and the maintenance of multiple connections across borders. This concept sheds light on the ways in

which Mexicans in Copenhagen establish and maintain relationships with their families and friends back in their country of origin.

## SECURITY

### Ontological Security

According to Kinnvall's (2004) perspective on Giddens' theory of ontological security is a concept that describes an individual's sense of confidence and trust in their environment and social relationships. It involves the security of being that "*provides individuals with a sense of confidence and trust that the world is what it appears to be.*" This sense of security is essential for people's mental health and well-being. Trust is a crucial element of ontological security, as it serves as an "*emotional inoculation against existential anxieties*".

As Kinnvall cites Giddens argues that ontological security is "*a protection against future threat and danger.*" This means that individuals who have a strong sense of ontological security are better prepared to face future challenges and uncertainties. Their sense of security enables them to feel more in control of their environment and better able to anticipate and respond to threats. (Kinnvall, 2004)

"*Migration, in this sense, is both a structural and a psychological process*". As individuals move from one place to another, they experience changes in their environment, social relationships, and sense of identity. This process can be challenging and often leads to a "*sense of powerlessness and dependence*". Insecurity and anxiety increase among many migrants, and these feelings are *frequently mixed with acute anxiety about their new circumstances and strong feelings of homelessness.* These challenges can undermine migrants' sense of ontological security, leading to negative mental health outcomes. (Kinnvall, 2004)

Security, particularly ontological security, is crucial for individuals' well-being and mental health. The process of migration can challenge individuals' sense of security, leading to feelings of powerlessness and anxiety. Understanding the impact of migration on ontological security helps us comprehend the specific challenges faced by Mexicans in their country of origin and the reason behind becoming an immigrant in Copenhagen.

## Fear of Crime

According to Hicks and Brown (2013) perceptions of risk are an important aspect of understanding how individuals and communities respond to potential dangers or threats. Fear of crime is a common problem affecting citizens in many countries throughout the Western world, and perceived risk has been shown to have a strong influence on fear of crime. Hicks and Brown (2013) state different perspectives from different authors such as Ferraro (1995), Skogan and Maxfield (1981), Killias (1990), and Jackson (2009). Ferraro (1995) notes that perceived risk is often disproportionate to actual rates of victimization, with people perceiving a much higher risk than the actual risk of criminal victimization. This discrepancy between perceived risk and actual risk highlights the importance of understanding the factors that influence individuals' perceptions of risk.

Skogan and Maxfield (1981) identified several socio-demographic characteristics that produce higher levels of fear of crime, including being female, old, black, or poor. Killias (1990) posited that vulnerability is a combination of three factors: exposure, loss of control, and serious consequences, all of which can involve physical, social, or situational aspects. Jackson (2009) provided a psychological perspective of vulnerability by examining the relationship between defense abilities, control, consequence, and likelihood, both for oneself and for one's group. (Hicks & Brown, 2013)

According to Hicks and Brown (2013), *“literature shows that risk perception is influenced by variables on both an individual and community level. On an individual level, previous victimization, gender, race, and income have a consistent effect on perceptions of risk. At the community level, a consistent effect was shown for perceived crime rate and incivilities.”* Showing that perceptions of risk are influenced by a variety of individual and community-level factors, including previous victimization, gender, race, income, perceived crime rate, incivilities, social cohesion, and racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood. The vulnerability explanation, along with psychological perspectives, provides insight into how individuals perceive risk. However, the complexity of the variables and the interplay between them highlights the need for further research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of perceptions of risk.

Along with security, fear of crime and perceptions of risk play significant roles in shaping individuals' experiences and behaviors within a community. The Mexican diaspora, like other migrant communities, may have distinct perceptions of risk influenced by socio-demographic factors, previous victimization, and community-level characteristics. Recognizing these factors can contribute to a better understanding of how fear of crime and perceived risk impact the daily lives of Mexicans when they were back in Mexico and now, in Copenhagen.

## SOCIAL IDENTITY

Social identity theory is a well-established psychological theory that explains how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics. According to Richard Jenkins (2014), “*social identity is the human capacity – rooted in language – to know ‘who’s who’ (and hence ‘what’s what’). This involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are and so on.*” This means that social identity is not just about our own individual identity, but also about our relationship to others and the groups to which we belong.

Jenkins (2014) emphasizes that “*social identity is a process – identification – not a ‘thing’.* It is not something that one can have, or not, it is something that one does.” This means that social identity is constantly being negotiated and constructed through interactions with others. For example, the way we present ourselves to others, the way we behave in group situations, and the way we respond to others’ behaviors all contribute to the formation of our social identity.

Moreover, social identity can have important consequences for how we treat others. According to Jenkins (2014), “*to identify someone could be enough to decide how to treat her.*” This means that the social categories to which we belong (or are perceived to belong) can influence how others treat us. For example, if someone is seen as belonging to a certain racial or ethnic group, they may be treated differently by others based on stereotypes or prejudices associated with that group.

One of the key aspects of social identity theory is that it helps us to understand how group membership shapes our sense of self and our interactions with others. This is particularly relevant in today’s diverse and complex society where individuals belong to multiple social

groups simultaneously and negotiate the boundaries of those groups. Social identity theory also highlights the importance of language and communication in the construction of social identity. The way we use language to describe ourselves and others, and the way we communicate with others, can have a profound impact on our social identity and our relationships with others. (Jenkins, 2014)

In conclusion, social identity theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how group membership shapes our sense of self and our interactions with others. Steve Jenkins' contributions to the field have emphasized the role of language and communication in the construction of social identity, and the importance of recognizing social identity as a process rather than a fixed 'thing'. Understanding the complexities of social identity can help us to build more inclusive and equitable societies where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. (Jenkins, 2014)

Social identity theory highlights the importance of group membership and the construction of social identity through language and communication. Mexicans in Copenhagen navigate multiple social groups simultaneously because of their very specific living situation where they are very far away from home and try to make a living in a very different country. Their sense of self is shaped by their interactions with others and their belonging to different communities. Understanding how social identity dynamics function in each different community is essential for promoting inclusivity and equity in a diverse society.

## DIASPORA

In order to understand the Mexican community living in Denmark it is important to explore the term diaspora. This concept can help explain how populations interact with each other, how collective identities are formed and sustained, and how people who have been separated from their original homeland create and maintain their identities in a new environment, but also how they pass down generations the sense of belonging to the country of origin. Robin Cohen (1997) argues that diaspora is not only a physical process, but also psychological, cultural, and social. He states that diasporas are characterized by a shared identity, a sense of belonging to a collective and a nostalgia for the homeland. He also emphasizes the importance of diasporic networks as a means for maintaining identity and solidarity among members of the diaspora.

Diaspora is an important concept in social science that can help explain how populations interact with each other and how collective identities are formed and reformed. “Diaspora is a way of reformulating the identities and loyalties of a population.” Brubaker 2005 cited by (Burgess, 2020). It is a way of understanding how people, who have been separated from their original homeland, create, and sustain their identities in a new environment. Diaspora can also be viewed as a form of resistance or adaptation to the social, political, and economic conditions of a new environment. By examining the experiences of diasporic communities, we can gain insight into the dynamics of social, economic, and political change.

It seems that the term diaspora is something very simple however, according to Burgess (2020) not all the communities who live elsewhere other than their country of origin qualifies as diaspora, even if they are described that way. They need to behave in a certain way, for example in order for a group of migrants to be a diaspora they need to live up to four elements: forced dispersion, retention of a collective historical and cultural memory of the dispersion, the will to transmit a heritage, and the ability of the group to survive over time. (Shuval, 2000)

In that line, other authors, agree on this theory and talk about the four elements in a slightly different way, take Bauböck (2010) cited in (Burgess, 2020), they claim that the four elements that are needed for a group of people to be called a diaspora differ in that they should include: traumatic dispersal to multiple destinations, maintenance of collective identities across generations, lateral ties across borders, and a strong orientation toward a real or imagined homeland.

However, Shuval (2000) emphasizes that diasporas cannot be described with one distinct set of qualities, but instead a combination of factors must be taken into account. These factors include the relationships between members of the diaspora, their attitudes towards their homeland, and how they behave when returning to their homeland or not. In order to analyze these factors, Shuval divides them into different levels and categorizes them according to the three dimensions of diaspora, host country, and homeland.

Finally, the concept of diaspora provides insights into how Mexicans in Copenhagen maintain their identity and sense of belonging to their homeland. The diasporic experience involves a shared identity, a collective historical and cultural memory, and the maintenance of networks and connections across borders. Recognizing the diasporic nature of the Mexican community in Copenhagen helps us appreciate their experiences and challenges in integrating into Danish society while preserving their cultural heritage.

According to Shuval (2000), diaspora needs to live up to four elements that were mentioned before but on the other hand, she believes that it cannot be described with a concrete set of qualities. This way the term can be used very broadly and Mexicans living in Denmark qualify as diaspora because of the following characteristics: they feel a deep connection to their homeland by celebrating holidays, visiting their country of origin quite often, and attending Mexican events in Denmark, they are surrounded by a Mexican community, keeping networks and connections across nations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of the literature review is to present a set of articles about the Mexican diaspora, their activities and visibility in mostly European countries. Most of the texts are focused on their usage of social media and strategies to fight the violence through art in their homeland. Moreover, the presented authors show different approaches to diaspora as a theory. Throughout our research we have found out that the literature on the Mexican diaspora has been mainly focused on Mexicans living in the United States, and even though the literature is still about the Mexican diaspora we would like to bring new information about how this phenomenon takes place in Europe, specifically in Copenhagen from the Mexican immigrants' perspective.

Not so many scholars have mentioned the part of diaspora that live in European countries. David Ramirez Plascencia raises that in his article about Mexicans living in Barcelona and their usage of social media platforms (Ramírez Plascencia, 2020). The author pays attention to Mexicans and their strategies to link their life in Spain and their homeland. Moreover, he explains how the existence of the internet and social media let them preserve their identity as Mexicans but also makes their life easier in Spain. We find the aspect of social media usage

very initial because this element was mentioned very often in our semi-structured interviews when we asked our participants how they stay in touch with their families in Mexico.

The research made by Plascencia shows that around half of the Latin American region population will use the internet in 2020. In addition, nearly 82 million of Mexico's Internet users, or all of them, have at least one social media profile (Ramírez Plascencia, 2020). The aim of the author's work is to describe the presence of Mexicans in Barcelona, their opinion of the social and economic environment in Spain, and to investigate the role that social media has played in the city's reallocation process. His research aims to comprehend how social media connects Mexicans to their culture in their country of origin (Ramírez Plascencia, 2020). Plascencia in his theoretical framework focuses on diaspora and discusses the original definition and its origins connected to the expulsion of Jews and other groups from their homelands, including Greeks and Armenians (Ramírez Plascencia, 2020). However, he adds that recently other academics have developed a more expansive theory that places more emphasis on the idea of identity than on ethnic composition of communities. For migrants, identification encompasses more than just a sense of community; it can also refer to a common identity that transcends borders and ethnicities (Ramírez Plascencia, 2020). The author adds that migrant identity can be also found in traditional food, ceremonies and determination to protect their culture (Ramírez Plascencia, 2020). The participants of our interviews mentioned the aspect of Mexican food and cultivating traditions in their daily life in Denmark but also what they miss the most about Mexico.

Lorena Nessi Garcia and Olga Guedes Baileys use the Mexican diaspora to analyze class, race and distinctions on social networking sites (García & Bailey, 2018). The research is based on interviews and ethnographic research of Mexicans who are users of Social Networking Sites (SNSs). According to the authors of articles, Mexicans who live in European countries who are active on their social media, including Facebook, mostly are individuals who are from privileged backgrounds (García & Bailey, 2018). The purpose of this article is to examine whether immigrants use the Internet, with a focus on social networking sites (SNSs). Recent research on immigrant and diaspora communities, particularly those from Mexico, has suggested that SNSs can be used to forge connections while also fostering a unique and critical perspective on how these platforms can be used to discriminate against less privileged groups based on their class and race (García & Bailey,



2018). The research made by the authors did not mean to find participants in specific European countries, but most of them turned out to be a part of the Mexican diaspora living in Europe who identify themselves as international and mobile (García & Bailey, 2018). Most of the Mexicans that use SNS have university degree level education and have successful work lives. According to the data gathered by the authors, the majority of participants led an international lifestyle, which was evident in their travel photos, and postings, as well as their preferences for luxury goods and leisure activities (García & Bailey, 2018). According to our data completed through our semi-structured interviews, the Mexicans that live in Copenhagen, similarly to Nessi Garcia and Guedes Bailey research, come from privileged families who made it possible to come to Copenhagen to study or educate themselves in their work field. They visit Mexico regularly which is possible due to their stable income, moreover they travel regularly or lived in different European countries before moving to Denmark.

Participants of the authors study, both *are proud to be Mexican and show their ethnic pride* but also have a *tendency to ... get together in a European context where being international is seen as an asset that helps to become part of an exclusive group* (García & Bailey, 2018).

The article by Larissa Lara-Guerrero is devoted to Mexican artists living in Europe who use art as strategies to respond to violence in their homeland. The author of the text bases her study in Brussels and Paris. In her paper Lara-Guerrero uses diaspora theories and their role in conflicts in their countries of origin, she mentions both approaches, immigrants who look for peace and resolution of conflicts or negative agents (Lara-Guerrero, 2021). According to Lara-Guerrero, diasporas have been portrayed as political mediators or economic agents working to send remittances to get past the state of emergency and support the end of the conflict. In addition, they have the power to lobby for political and violent goals or to raise money for weapons (Lara-Guerrero, 2021). The research made by the author shows that Mexicans living in Europe who participate in diaspora activities and transnational political events very often hold a bachelor degree and move to Paris and Brussels to continue their education (Lara-Guerrero, 2021), similarly to participants of the study made by Nessi Garcia & Guedes Bailey and Plascencia. This case is also seen in our research that many Mexicans come to Europe to continue their education and/or have their internships there.

The author of the article mentions how the activism activities made them afraid of threat and surveillance. Moreover, she writes about how in order to express their rage and disgust toward the government and Mexican institutions, activists and artists use the stage. They are conscious of the advantage they have in communicating with and raising awareness among a Mexican and European audience (Lara-Guerrero, 2021). Lara-Guerrero gives examples of different activities that Mexican diaspora are part of to raise awareness about violence and conflict in their homeland for example performing Mexican, traditional music with lyrics with political messages or painting murals to condemn the violence in Mexico's context (Lara-Guerrero, 2021).

In addition, Mexicans in Brussels and Paris come up with strategies to change the legal and judicial systems like military action, cease-fire agreements, and assistance for refugees (Lara-Guerrero, 2021). The author of the article concludes that Mexican immigrants' efforts in Brussels and Paris have, to some extent, helped to change the conflict, lessen actual bloodshed, and develop capacity to enhance security in their home countries. Even though they do not reside in the nation where the conflict is occurring, migrants are permitted to participate in initiatives for conflict settlement (Lara-Guerrero, 2021). This aspect is also relevant to our study, considering the fact that many participants of our research see difference in security level when they compare Mexico and Denmark.

The “American Dream” is a term owed to James Truslow who described it as the *dream of a better, richer and happier life for all*, and ever since then Mexicans have been calling their migration to the USA the “American Dream”. (Wills, 2015) Everyone wants better opportunities and an upgraded quality of life, however this has changed overtime. Now Mexicans don't move across borders looking for better jobs or economic stability but as Rios Contreras states in her research, Mexicans are moving away from their home country because of drug related violence, and extortion. According to her research, Mexican migration to the United States has *diminished steadily since 2000*, however with the war on drugs by president Felipe Calderon in 2006 drug related violence has increased so much that by the spring of 2022 the Mexican government revealed that since 1964 more than one hundred thousand people had gone missing and more than 80% of the cases happened between 2006-2022. (Senado de la República, 2022)

Migrating because of violence and the feeling of insecurity was very recurrent in our research, that is why it was very relevant to read that *Mexicans are migrating out of fear of drug-related violence and extortion*. However, according to Rios Contreras, only the people who live in the borderline cities with the USA are the ones migrating to the northern country due to the financial convenience from being close to the border but also because violence has been much more cruel and present in these border states. *This is particularly true in border counties, where Mexican drug-trafficking organizations have caused large increases in homicide rates and where migration to the United States entails relatively low costs*. It is very interesting because during our research, we did not encounter one person that lived in a borderline city with the USA, most of our participants were from the capital whereas others lived in big cities in the center, small cities in the north and south of the republic but neither bordering other countries. (Rios Contreras, 2014)

Our aim with this research is to present the Mexican diaspora from the social perspective, and the individual point of view that is why information coming from the individual migrants is relevant to our study. Muhammad Zameer Nawaz and Akhtar Aziz in their research *Lacking home: Lacan reads diaspora* (2022), they state that a migrant could never be happy because of their loss of home and home is much more than a physical structure; it is a meaningful relationship with a place that is often dynamic and interactive. It is a concept that evokes a variety of meanings and emotional connotations for different people. For those who are recently settled migrants and asylum seekers, home may be conspicuous by its absence, but this absence can be used to explore how home is recreated in different ways, through emotions, practices, and living arrangements. Examining the life experiences of migrants can also help to understand how much the home experience relies on a specific place, if it is transferable to another, and how interpersonal relationships can be just as important as material settings. (Bocagnni, 2017)

This article explores the idea that the loss of home, whether physical or imaginary, is a common experience for diasporic individuals, and that this loss can result in a perpetual state of desire for home that drives the creative potential of diasporic subjectivity. The article draws upon Lacan's concept of lack and desire to argue that the journey a migrant goes through perpetuates a lacking diasporic subject that is forever desirous of home. (Zameer Nawaz & Aziz, 2022)

Contrary to conventional psychoanalytic and diaspora approaches, which regard diasporic loss of home as disruptive and symptomatic of various pathologies, the article suggests that this lack and resultant desire are the sources of diasporic creativity. The trauma and melancholy that arise from the loss of home offer a platform for diasporic creativity and innovation, leading to the creation of new forms of living in new lands that pave the way for acculturation. (Zameer Nawaz & Aziz, 2022)

Rosas López (2005) makes a great analysis of the famous book *La Dimensión Política de la Migración Mexicana* by Calderón and Martínez (2002) where she states how the Mexican diaspora behaves in a politically active community. Calderón (2002) affirms that there are three aspects that have to be taken into account when talking about a migrant, which are globalization, transnationalism and political socialization. It is quite relevant to our research everything that has to do with the political socialization since according to the article, it focuses on the experiences of migrants and identifies three types of socialization: primary socialization which occurs in Mexico, ongoing socialization that happens throughout life, and "oversocialization" which is experienced when a person realizes that the society they have returned to is not the same as the one they left behind. (Rosas López, 2005)

One of the main inspirations for our research was the differences between diasporas in Copenhagen. Given that Denmark is a very politically active and democratic country it is important to know how involved are our participants in having a democratic life inside and outside their country of origin.

The texts that were mentioned above inspired us to research more about the Mexican diaspora. We find this topic very important and the literature review and literature search made us realize that not a lot of scholars write about Mexicans that live in Europe. As some of the researchers mentioned in their articles, most of the research available is about illegal immigrants in the neighboring country. Our aim is to fill the gap to the research about Mexican diaspora living outside the USA from a social and Mexican point of view, but mostly to supplement the research about Mexicans living in Europe that is very limited.

## BACKGROUND

### MEXICANS IN DENMARK

Our research focuses on the Mexican diaspora residing in Denmark. To provide a comprehensive understanding of this group, it is important to first examine certain characteristics based on official statistics obtained from the Mexican Embassy in Denmark (Appendix B). This includes analyzing the types of visas that allow them to stay in Denmark and identifying the regions in Mexico from which they originate. By delving into these details, we can lay the foundation for a more insightful exploration of the experiences and perspectives of the Mexican diaspora in Denmark.

According to the statistics of the Mexican Embassy in Denmark from January 2023, there are 1981 Mexicans who are residents in Denmark. The data shows that 910 of them are men and 1071 are women. Most of the Mexican diaspora living in Denmark are married, more than 1100 citizens (Appendix B).

Majority of the Mexicans that reside in Denmark are viewed as professionals and have special individual qualifications. According to information available from New in Denmark, an official website where foreigners can apply for the residence permit, this type of use is dedicated to performers or artists, including singers, musicians and conductors, professional athletes or coaches, and specialized chefs (New to Denmark, 2023). Around 1100 Mexicans stay in Denmark based on this visa. The program is intended for a variety of people, not just artists, athletes, and cooks with specialized training (New to Denmark, 2023).

A Large number of Mexican residents are students who come to Denmark on student visas to get their degrees from Danish Universities; around 350 students stayed in Denmark in January 2023. The Mexican diaspora in Denmark are also businessmen, missionaries, people employed in trade or people dedicated to home (Appendix B).

The majority of Mexicans residing in Denmark are concentrated in Copenhagen and its surrounding areas, totaling approximately 1,200 individuals. Based on data provided by the Mexican Embassy in Copenhagen, it is evident that a significant number of Mexicans who migrate to Denmark originate from Mexico City (Appendix B). Additionally, a substantial portion of the Mexican diaspora in Denmark hails from the states of Mexico and Nuevo

León. In contrast, there are relatively few individuals from other regions of Mexico currently residing in Denmark, with their numbers totaling no more than 100. This information provides valuable insights into the geographic distribution of the Mexican diaspora in Denmark and sets the stage for a more comprehensive examination of their experiences and integration in Danish society (Appendix B).

The conversations we had with our interlocutors but also information from our networks, made us realize that there are more Mexicans in Denmark, who are not presented in statistics available from the Mexican Embassy. Some of the Mexicans try different ways to get to European countries, including Denmark. We are aware that some Mexicans enter Denmark by using their Spanish or Italian passport as their entrance. Through our data collection and being close to the Mexican diaspora we know that some people have European ancestry and that is their way to stay in Denmark but they feel Mexican rather than Spanish or Italian.

## CRIME IN MEXICO

One of the themes that are discussed in our paper is security, because the issue is mentioned by our interlocutors when they talk about differences between Denmark and Mexico. We find it important to introduce the latest situation in Mexico related to lack of safety and where it comes from. Many Mexicans do not feel safe in their homeland and the danger related to high killing rate, violence and the criminal groups activities, make a lot of citizens migrate to neighboring countries like the USA or to other parts of the world like Denmark.

Mexico's "war on drugs" is characterized by media coverage of executions, mass killings, and the discovery of mass graves. Human rights organizations report widespread abuses by the police and military, including torture and extrajudicial killings. Many Mexicans have personal experiences with violence, such as kidnappings and disappearances, making bystander agency complex. The indiscriminate nature of violence and high victim count also puts them at risk of victimization (Moon & Treviño-Rangel, 2020). Mexico's national homicide rate increased by 76.3% between 2015 and 2021, reaching an average of 94 murders per day in 2021. The 'War on Drugs' effort launched by President Calderón in 2006 is to blame for the increase in violence. In 2018, there were 33,341 drug-related killings, which set a record and represented a 15% increase from the year before. With claims of abductions, extrajudicial killings, torture, and human rights breaches, the situation in Mexico

is worrying. Between 2018 and mid-2021, 25,000 people went missing, according to the National Registry of the Disappeared maintained by the Mexican government (Lara-Guerrero & Rojon, 2022).

The dominant narrative of recent violence in Mexico dates back to the contentious 2006 presidential election, in which Felipe Calderón defeated Manuel Lopez Obrador by a slim margin. The election, which occurred at the height of a summer of spectacular criminal violence, particularly in the state of Michoacan, which has a long history of drug manufacture and trafficking, was marked by irregularities, recounts, and considerable civic protest. In one infamous incident, five decapitated heads were dumped on a dance floor in Uruapan, one of Michoacan's largest cities, coupled with a menacing note left by the murderers (Moon & Treviño-Rangel, 2020). These kinds of situations took place repeatedly in Mexico in a short period of time.

Despite the fact that criminal violence had not significantly increased for 20 years, Calderón started his "war on drugs" soon after taking office to strengthen his political legitimacy by a show of force. In order to fight drug trafficking and foster a sense of calm and stability, he sent the military and federal police. The goal of this effort was to establish Calderón's authority and political notoriety. It became his defining legacy. But since the commencement of this conflict, there has been a substantial increase in the number of unlawful detentions, acts of torture, and murders carried out by security personnel under the guise of drug enforcement. Checkpoints operated by the military and the police have developed into sites for extortion and violence, frequently connected to the uncovering of mass graves (Moon & Treviño-Rangel, 2020).

In addition to drug trafficking, Calderón's "war" also targeted criminal gangs engaged in the exploitation of natural resources, human trafficking, and arms trafficking. Ironically, these illegal activities help the government and its institutions, with whom they have a long history. The arrest of Genaro Garca Luna, a former minister of public security, for allegedly sheltering drug trafficking operations and the iconic case of the Ayotzinapa students who were kidnapped by police personnel cooperating with criminal gangs are two instances of this collusion. It is commonly known that the state participates in and shields criminal activity and that several cartels have military roots. Across all tiers of government, organized crime

cooperates with law enforcement, elected officials, and judges (Moon & Treviño-Rangel, 2020).

Mexico's fight on drugs has continued under the governments of Calderón, Peña Nieto, and Lopez Obrador. Official statements to the contrary, there has been no reduction in violence. Both Calderón and Peña Nieto blamed conflicts between drug cartels rather than the government for the surge in homicide rates. They frequently suggested that those who were jailed or slain by security personnel were deserving of their fate by being involved in drugs or organized crime. This discourse, known as the "cartel wars discourse," heavily relies on state and government sources, presumes guilt before innocence, depicts victims as being involved in the drug trade, assumes that police involvement in criminal activity is the exception rather than the rule, and encourages the notion that more policing improves security (Moon & Treviño-Rangel, 2020).

Moon & Treviño-Rangel in their article conducted interviews with many Mexicans and asked them about their experiences in Mexico, safety and violence. In many cases, participants of the research but also presidents of Mexico were mentioning that victims are in majority of cases, involved in the criminal organization in different ways (Moon & Treviño-Rangel, 2020). The prevailing opinion is that those who have been the targets of violence are frequently thought to have engaged in illegal behavior. However, there is also the paradoxical belief that anyone can become violent. The participants agreed that because those in positions of power are viewed as untouchable, regular people are more likely to become victims. They highlighted that it is no longer appropriate to refer to the victims as cartel members or as being linked with criminal organizations. Everyone seemed to agree that anyone was a potential victim of violence or forced disappearance. Participants believed they should continue living their lives despite being aware of their vulnerability, which occasionally resulted from a feeling of helplessness. Despite vulnerability, they emphasized the importance of carrying on with life, reflecting a sense of helplessness and resilience (Moon & Treviño-Rangel, 2020).

The extent of Mexican migrants' investment in the social and political development of their homeland may be underestimated if we solely focus on their engagement through traditional political avenues. Studies conducted in the United States have revealed that Mexican



migrants generally hold a pessimistic perspective on Mexican politics, frequently linking it to issues such as corruption, violence, poverty, and a lack of governance capability (Lara-Guerrero & Rojon, 2022). Less than 50% of Mexicans reported having at least some confidence in the national government, making Mexico one of the Latin American nations with the greatest levels of political institution mistrust, according to public opinion survey data from 2021. Growing mistrust of the government may lead to complaints from both domestic and foreign residents, which could encourage unusual kinds of mobilization within the emigrant community (Lara-Guerrero & Rojon, 2022).

Larissa Lara-Guerrero in her articles about Mexicans activists in Europe who use art as their strategy to spread awareness about the violence in Mexico pays attention to unconventional movements to fight systematic violation of human rights. The Mexican diaspora in Brussels has responded to the unrest and instability in their country by planning deterritorialized political demonstrations to condemn Mexico's ongoing human rights abuses and impunity (Lara-Guerrero & Rojon, 2022).

Understanding the context of the situation in Mexico provides valuable insights into the motivations and experiences of Mexican migrants. The high levels of violence, crime rates, and systemic issues contribute to their desire for a safer and more promising life elsewhere. Exploring the Mexican diaspora's engagement in unconventional movements, such as deterritorialized political demonstrations, sheds light on their efforts to raise awareness about human rights abuses and advocate for justice in their home country. By examining the broader social and political landscape in Mexico, the analytical chapter will enhance our understanding of the interviewees' perspectives and illuminate the complex factors that drive migration and shape their experiences in Denmark.

## ANALYSIS

This next chapter alludes to meaningful insights and the analysis of complex issues in the field of migration, specifically in the diaspora of Mexicans in Copenhagen. Through this analysis and research, we hope to fill in a gap of information on Mexicans in Northern Europe, since most of the investigations are mostly focusing on Mexicans in the USA and very little focus on Southern Europe. However, by building upon previous scholarly work, we seek to enhance the understanding of this complex phenomenon and provide valuable insights into the reasons behind the Mexican migration experience.

As it is presented in the methodology section, this research focused on Mexicans aged 27-52 living in Copenhagen due to reasons like marriage, work, or studies. Through qualitative interviews, the study explored why they left Mexico and how their identity is influenced in their new country. Starting with interviews as a primary source of narratives, recurring patterns, and themes were revealed, including security, fear of crime, contact with their home country, and citizenship or permanent residence. These themes formed the basis of the study's theoretical framework, highlighting the multifaceted experiences of Mexican migrants in Copenhagen.

Throughout the interviews, a predominant theme that resonated across all participants was the contrast between the insecurity experienced in their country of origin, Mexico, and the sense of freedom they found in Copenhagen. Moreover, the interviews also revealed other noteworthy concepts, such as identity formation and a deep-rooted connection to Mexico, emphasizing that regardless of their livelihood in Copenhagen, Mexico remains an intrinsic part of their sense of belonging.

To ensure clarity and coherence, the analysis was intended to be structured as the theory chapter, meticulously addressing specific aspects of the research objectives. However, due to the interrelated nature of the concepts and experiences shared by the participants, the analysis encompasses the exploration of the adaptation process of Mexicans to Denmark while simultaneously we analyze the motivation to leave Mexico and the deep connection to their country of origin. Therefore, we have chosen to structure the analysis in a way to answer all of our research questions, facilitate a logical progression of ideas by enabling readers to

navigate seamlessly through the analysis, and gain comprehensive insights into the key findings and implications.

We have decided to first answer *Why do Mexicans decide to leave their homeland and migrate to Denmark?* In order to answer this we will allude to the theory of ontological security by Kinnvall, and fear of crime by Hicks and Brown. Followed by analyzing the sense of identity, transnationalism, and diaspora to answer our second part of the research question: *how do they keep and perceive their further connection to Mexico?* Moreover, the third and last part of our objective of this study is: *how do they understand and perceive their integration into Danish society and/or their ability to settle in Denmark?* and it is important to reveal that the answer from the participants is intertwined with the other two questions given that our participants combine their motivation to leave and connection to Mexico with the reasons to integrate and settle in Denmark, that is why some of the quotes from the participants might be repeated and analyzed through a different lens.

## MOTIVATION TO MOVE OUT FROM MEXICO

This analysis delves into the motivations and experiences of Mexicans residing in Copenhagen. The study focuses on their decision to migrate and explores how their perceptions of security and freedom in Denmark contrast with their lives in Mexico. Drawing upon Kinnvall's concept of ontological security and insights from interviews conducted with the participants, this analysis sheds light on the factors driving their migration and their subsequent experiences in Copenhagen.

The interviews revealed a common theme among the participants, with all of them mentioning the lack of security and freedom they experienced in Mexico as a key reason for leaving. This finding aligns with Kinnvall's definition of ontological security, which emphasizes feeling confident and protected in one's environment. In Denmark, the participants expressed a sense of security and being taken care of, which starkly contrasts their experiences in Mexico.

"The state helps you to cover those worries, and so that on its own is a big contrast to what you would find in Mexico because in Mexico we are very much used to struggling

so much to get so little, and here it's the opposite, you struggle nothing to get too much. That's the main difference that I see now." (Appendix D)

"In Mexico, it's...a chaos but it's what the people need to live, to survive. And here is what the people need to live to survive with the facilities that they have." (Appendix L)

Contrary to Kinnvall's theory that migrants may feel anxious and powerless in their new environment, the participants in this study experienced a positive shift in their ontological security upon moving to Denmark. Returning to Mexico, they reported feeling different and stressed, highlighting the contrasting sense of security and well-being they found in Copenhagen.

"I think I'm also living in a country that gives you a higher quality of life than other countries. For me, things like the weather or it getting dark early are secondary, coming from a country where you see people dying in the emergency room of the hospital." (Appendix L)

"You have to be aware everywhere, but not as much as in Mexico. So, I think, maybe at my job, we didn't use to have, like, the best working conditions, but comparing to Mexico, like being in a kitchen, also we were in heaven. We get good salary. And also, like, in Denmark, I think in general, you have very good life quality." (Appendix A)

The findings of this study indicate that the lack of security and freedom in Mexico and the ontological security provided by Denmark were the primary drivers behind the participants' decision to migrate. These findings align with Kinnvall's notion of ontological security and highlight the importance of considering individual experiences and backgrounds when exploring migration dynamics. By shedding light on the motivations and experiences of Mexicans in Copenhagen, this analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the migration process and the pursuit of ontological security.

The interviews show that migrants that moved from Mexico see the big difference between safety and freedom in Mexico and Denmark. According to Giddens, cited by Kinnvall (2004), the concept of ontological security describes a person's perception of consistency, order, and stability in their social environment. It is the arbitrary sensation of certainty and assurance

brought on by dependable social interactional patterns and the consistency of an individual's identity. Kinnvall (2004) contends that ontological stability is necessary for people to successfully negotiate and comprehend their social environment. One of the conducted interviews shows that migration is one of the strategies that people use to find stability and cope with the unstable situation in their homeland. Migration and life in safer countries like Denmark let them develop and give them access to new opportunities on many levels.

“ I think, uh, Mexico is, is, is great, but um, but uh, unfortunately, the security and the political situation, um, right now does not allow, I think that doesn't allow people to develop, um, entirely as, as, as, as a person, whether it's here in Denmark, I see that opportunity to, um, to have a, a career, to have a work life, but also to have a personal life and stuff. “ (Appendix J)

One of the main reasons behind the migration is the fear of crime expressed by Mexicans in Copenhagen, focusing on the influence of the prevailing security concerns in Mexico. With over 100,000 reported missing persons since the 1960s, it is not surprising that the majority of our participants discussed their crime concerns, emphasizing the lack of security within their homeland. Drawing upon Hicks and Brown (2013), this analysis delves into the factors that shape individuals' perceptions of risk, including physical, social, and situational aspects. Additionally, it explores the intersectionality of oppression and the impact it may have on vulnerability and risk perception.

Hicks and Brown (2013) assert that perceptions of risk are influenced by various factors, such as gender, race, previous victimization, and societal incivilities. Our interviews encompassed a diverse range of participants, including both men and women, young and older adults, all coming from privileged backgrounds. Despite their advantageous positions, they still expressed a heightened perception of risk associated with their experiences in Mexico.

"In Mexico, and I notice now when I go for holidays, I get very stressed about the insecurity. Like someone's going to rob me, or even my mom is saying, 'Don't take Uber, don't take a taxi, it's dangerous,' or 'Send me your location in real-time.' All that stuff." (Appendix A)

According to Hicks and Brown (2013), the intersectionality of oppression, including racial and ethnic composition, gender, and income, can contribute to individuals' vulnerability and shape their perceptions of risk. However, it is important to note that Mexicans in Denmark experience *segmented assimilation*, a term coined by Alba, which may involve facing racism and lower income levels. Despite these challenges, they felt significantly safer in Denmark than in their country of origin, where they belonged to a privileged context. (Reyes Romo, 2008)

"I see it is more about security and to be safe, and those are the big things that are different because they are the things you cannot compare." (Appendix L)

Moreover, Mexicans that take part in our research not only care about their well-being but also about their family members' future. The situation in Mexico can be unsafe and unstable and fear of crime can make many citizens leave their homeland and not see their life there anymore. The fear of crime can impact the quality of life and well-being of migrants. Constantly worrying about personal safety and the safety of their families can be mentally and emotionally draining, making it difficult to fully enjoy and engage in daily life activities (Hicks & Brown, 2013). In addition, fear of crime can be a significant factor driving migrants to seek alternative living arrangements to find a greater sense of security and peace of mind (Hicks & Brown, 2013).

"[back in 2014] ... I was really clear that I wanted to stay here... Especially because of A [her daughter], because it's very uncomfortable for, especially for girls, but for everybody just to be outside with the children, and then it's not as safe as here. They cannot be free. [...] She [her daughter] has the opportunity to live in a safe place, in a better environment." (Appendix C)

In our background chapter, we mentioned the unstable situation in Mexico since 2006. A lot of people since that time are victims of human trafficking and killing by criminal gangs or authorities. It is an apparent reason why many Mexicans are afraid of living in their homeland and raising their children there.

## CONNECTION TO MEXICO

This next section of the analysis addresses the second part of the research question, focusing on how Mexicans in Copenhagen *perceive their connection to their homeland*. Additionally, it explores the will of our participants to settle in Denmark. In order to complete this the

concepts of transnationalism and sense of identity were crucial and intertwined, examining the changing social identity of this specific group within the context of living far away from home while still staying connected to Mexico. Given that we are exploring a group of migrants it is highly relevant to talk about diaspora and whether or not our very specific scope would qualify as diaspora and the reasons behind it.

Drawing on Jenkins' concept of social identity, which emphasizes its fluid and negotiated nature, this analysis explores the participants' experiences and whether they feel different upon returning to Mexico. With this analysis, we hope to shed light on the interplay between citizenship, home, and transnational connections. By exploring the experiences and perceptions of Mexicans in Denmark, we gain insights into their sense of identity, their aspirations for stability and security, and the strategies they employ to navigate the challenges and opportunities in their new lives.

Considering the experiences of this group, it is crucial to discuss the concepts of transnationalism and diaspora. Transnationalism refers to the maintenance of social, cultural, economic, and political ties across borders. Although the participants have migrated far from their homeland, their sense of connection to Mexico remains intact, albeit with shifts in their social identity due to their experiences in Copenhagen. While further analysis is required to determine whether this group fits the definition of a diaspora, their evolving social identity and transnational connections underscore the complexities of their migration journey.

“It's a about a progress and how you grow as a person and you are never the same person that you were yesterday and of course you have to adapt to the place where you live and to the situations that are around you and because if not you will be that person that doesn't match when they're with the rest” (Appendix L)

Reyes Romo's perspective on transnationalism is explored, emphasizing the experience of migrants living in a state of exclusion due to the notion of nation. Romo asserts that individuals who do not belong to the same territorial boundaries or share the language of the host country face challenges in fully assimilating, compelling them to maintain connections with their country of origin. This phenomenon is referred to as the "transnational social space." The participants expressed a desire to maintain Mexican culture and foster a sense of community.

“In Mexico, it's a big thing- Día de los Muertos. That and now we're talking also, you know the Fastelavn, then they break a piñata. I was telling N, when our kids are here, we're going to break piñatas. On their birthdays because in Mexico is like you break a piñata and then you're singing the song. I was trying to teach him the song. Also in Christmas, not traditions but his family wanted me to make Mexican dishes that we would eat on Christmas in Mexico” (Appendix A)

Mexicans living in Denmark find different strategies to share their life between Mexico and Denmark. They live in Europe but still celebrate some Mexican events and are in constant touch with their family members. They miss their families but new opportunities and better life quality motivate them to settle their new life in Denmark. New technologies and social media let them be in touch with their family and friends back in Mexico. The participants highlight the significant role of social media in facilitating communication with their home country, creating a two-way exchange.

Through these platforms, our participants gain insights into the lives of their relatives, while also allowing their friends and family back home to learn about their experiences in Denmark. Reyes Romo (2008) posits that the transnational social space encompasses not only the migrants themselves but also includes the people, culture, politics, religion, and other aspects they left behind in their country of origin.

"By telephone with my parents and also with the camera, like video conferences, video chats more, with them. And with my friends it's more about by telephone, like WhatsApp, using the telephone, or Facebook and chats and that sort of thing. And also when I'm going to Mexico, I normally reunite all my friends at the same time. And I'm, yeah, I used to see them all." (Appendix C)

The primary means of maintaining this connection, as described by the participants, is through social media, predominantly engaging in weekly communication with family and friends while also trying to visit the country as much as possible and trying to spend quality time with their relatives.



"When I see them I really appreciate the time that I am with them [...] yeah, like you don't really care about all the other things that may bother you sometimes or get annoyed" (Appendix L)

[When talking about visiting Mexico] "I would like this to be, for instance, once and summer once in December every year" (Appendix D)

On the one hand, and according to our theoretical framework, we have all the connections conserved in the country of origin, and on the other hand, complete assimilation in the host country is not always possible because of the lack of connections. Alba calls it *segmented assimilation* and it forces migrants to end up in the worst levels of education, work, and society in general. The Mexicans in our research experience difficulties in their work life. It can be caused by many aspects, but very often the issue is a language barrier. Migrants who do not manage to assimilate fully, who do not speak the language of a host country, or who have obstacles on their path.

"...I just feel like I love it here, but probably it's not maybe ever going to give me the opportunities that I want... I have realized how difficult things are here. Because even my friends studying psychology in Germany, and they need like a lot of years of preparation. I think, okay, everything is hard, everything is bureaucratic, but you get there, no? And here, it almost seems nearly impossible... Even family members have told me, like, just come back. I'll get you the job that you want. Your life will be happy and easy here." (Appendix I)

Furthermore, the goal is to research how they perceive their connection to their homeland which is Mexico, that is why we explore the connection between transnationalism, and the migrants' sense of identity as our participants embody a dual sense of belonging, as they maintain ties to their country of origin while also becoming members of the host country. This dual belonging underscores the significance of transnationalism and diaspora in shaping their identities. While it is acknowledged that migrants do not always fully assimilate into the host culture, the participants express a merging of the two cultures within themselves, leading to the adoption of aspects of the host country's culture and social institutions. This blending of cultures contributes to the complex and evolving identities of the migrants in the study.

“It is mostly international European people who are maybe the base of my friends now [...] I actually miss Copenhagen before I leave it. When I go to Mexico and it's like two weeks before my trip to Mexico I'm like oh I'm gonna miss going climbing I'm gonna miss doing this, I am going to miss doing that, but you know working here or cycling in the city just a lot of small things that I love about being... about Copenhagen that won't happen my hometown [...] I see myself staying in Denmark for the next maybe five years or 10 I don't know I don't see a reason why to go back to Mexico at this point there's nothing waiting for me there” (Appendix D)

Cohen defines diaspora as a multifaceted process encompassing physical, social, and psychological dimensions. Burgess complements this definition by emphasizing its role in the reconfiguration of the identity of an entire population. This definition aligns closely with the experiences of identity and transnationalism observed among Mexicans residing in Copenhagen. Throughout the interviews conducted, it becomes evident that while the participants have undergone personal changes since leaving Mexico, their Mexican identity remains an integral part of their being, even in the face of acquiring permanent residency or Danish citizenship.

“... when I come back to Mexico and feel different of course, but I think it's just the age, the experience...” (Appendix L)

“one day I get my permanent residency here I will never be a Dane I always will be Mexican and if something happened [...] I always have a place where I can come back and I like that place [...] for me home is the place where I was born is where my family it is where my traditions belong” (Appendix L)

Cohen argues that diasporas are characterized by a shared identity, a sense of belonging, and nostalgia for the homeland. Some of our interviewees do exhibit these characteristics. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that certain participants, despite their connection to Mexico and their adherence to cultural traditions while actively preserving their heritage, prefer not to be perceived as part of the Mexican diaspora.

“I'll actually try to erase or yeah I delete any sort of characteristics on me or my behaviors that would tell anyone where I come from and it's not because I'm not proud of my country it's just because I don't want to be attached to the stereotypes of where I come from right? So, a lot of people when they talk to me they say where do you come from? I

just don't recognize the accent, where are you from? and I'm like OK sure I'm from Mexico and then they are like oh I have seen Narcos and it's like I hate this and I've had this conversation many times and I hate it" (Appendix D)

Migrants form and uphold connections with both their societies of origin and their new societies at various levels and social sectors. Some of the Mexicans living in Denmark, attempt to obtain their permanent residence permit or Danish citizenship despite many obstacles on their way. They feel connected to Denmark and would like to be closer to their host country for personal and practical reasons. Moreover, permanent residency can make migrants feel safer.

"I need to work for my residency, my permanent residency that I haven't gotten. And I haven't gotten it because I don't have all the requirements yet. Okay. Which means four years, or almost four years working full-time without a stop. So that's why it's very important for me just to get this period of time working full time. And then apply for the permanent residency, and then for the nationality, which takes a while. And I'm doing this because it is important, not because I really care about it, but it's important if something happens. So it allows me to stay here without R. Because when A [her daughter] gets 18 years old, if I just split up with R, I don't have the right to be here". (Appendix C)

The process to obtain permanent residence in Denmark or becoming a Danish citizen is complex and lengthy for non-European nationals. However, Mexicans, whether they have lived in Denmark for a shorter or longer period, would like to accomplish Danish citizenship.

"Well, now, in this moment, I would like to, to stay more, um, if I have the opportunity, even have like a Danish citizenship, and why not, uh, also become a, a Dane, right? By, by paper, like a passport and stuff." (Appendix J)

A lot of Mexicans are interested in becoming a Danish citizen, at the same time they are still deeply connected to their Mexican culture and they rarely say they feel Danish. In many cases, they are surrounded by the international community, Latin American community, or Mexican friends. Jenkins claims that social identity is produced and negotiated via social encounters rather than being fixed or preset. People form connections with and a sense of belonging to particular groups, which provides them with a framework for comprehending who they are and where they fit in society. Being a member of these groups influences a

person's social identity and determines their attitudes, behaviors, and self-worth. The theory of social identity can make us understand how migrants behave in different social groups and how their behavior changes based on the circumstances.

"I'm not quite sure if I'm integrated into Danish culture because still, I'm working with Latin American culture, with Latin American artists. So I'm living in my own environment, which is very Latin." (Appendix C)

Being surrounded by a community that is better known, can be a good strategy for the Mexican diaspora to have an easier life in a country far away from home. The complexity connected with becoming a Danish citizen makes some Mexicans think about moving to different European countries which can make this process faster and more simple.

"I guess I'll just be in Sweden for longer, maybe. So just for you to know, it's a very complex process. It's not like in the US that, okay, you get married, you get your green card, and maybe you cannot go to your country for one year and a half, two years. It's not like that. It's actually really difficult. It's a lot of requirements. And it's not that you get a green card here. Maybe you get the permit, but even though you've been living here for five, six years, maybe seven, if you get divorced, you have to return because your permit is for being a wife here." (Appendix I)

The path to obtaining Danish Citizenship or a permanent residence permit requires a lot of motivation and patience from foreigners living in Denmark. They are obliged to have a stable job or a certain amount of savings to be considered by Immigration authorities. On the other hand, transnational communities and diasporas share their life between their homeland and their new country. They assimilate with the new culture, and learn a new language but still feel connected to their country of origin.

"I would say home is Denmark, because I have a job here. I have my girlfriend here. I have, um, a lot of good friends. Um, yeah, I think like Denmark, I would say my home. But, um, but Mexico is like my second home, right? Like my safer home, of course, because I have my family there and it's my, the culture I grew up with... I'm not very good with the language, so I could feel lost or something." (Appendix J)

Some of the Mexicans we interviewed highlight the struggles to even just get their visa documents correct. Being in a relationship with Danish citizens can not be enough to live in Denmark easily without worrying about their visa status. One of the participants, who has been with a Danish partner for almost 10 years and got the *family reunification* permit rejected.

"even though there's a permit here to live as cohabitating partners, it is rarely accepted. I think like often you got rejected." (Appendix I)

### SETTLE IN DENMARK

According to our theoretical framework, social identity is a dynamic process that is constructed and negotiated through interactions and relationships with others. Therefore, it is subject to change when the environment changes. Inquiring about their experiences upon returning to Mexico, it was intriguing to find that most participants reported a positive change in themselves as a result of living in Copenhagen.

"I think that the influence that this life has on you is more positive than negative because maybe before I didn't mind crossing a red light, but now you think about it—should I cross the red light or not? Should I cross the street on the corner or not? These kinds of things." (Appendix L)

"[...] everything that you see different like the things that are happening every day but it yeah in a positive way sometimes you really feel like too comfortable like really trusting everyone nothing is happening everyone is helping or everyone is gonna be really clear on the way they communicate [...]" (Appendix L)

Some participants expressed the belief that people in Denmark are generally happier than their counterparts in Mexico, which contributes to an enhanced quality of life. They attributed this to factors such as daily routines, government support, volunteering opportunities, and communal gatherings, which they found lacking in their hometowns. These experiences have shaped their perception of happiness and influenced their overall well-being.

"I was very happy in Mexico, but I found myself happier here because of the little things that make up my daily routine, like cycling around the city. The government's support and the availability of volunteering opportunities and communal events have added to my happiness. These are things I love and value a lot that I could only find in Copenhagen." (Appendix D)

"I feel people here in Denmark are kind of friendly, leading their own normal lives, but they are not as defensive as people in Mexico. People in Mexico can get angry very fast. I don't know if it's because of traffic or other reasons, but things are a little less heated [here]." (Appendix J)

Overall, the participants' experiences indicate that living in Copenhagen has influenced their social identity, perceptions of happiness, and overall well-being. The positive changes they have experienced highlight the transformative power of their new environment and the potential for transnational connections that shape their sense of self within the context of being Mexican.

During our interviews, the Mexican diaspora in Denmark consistently mentioned the stark contrast in access to new opportunities that Denmark offers. Many of them expressed that upon returning to Mexico, they felt different and experienced stress, underscoring the stark difference in terms of security and well-being they found in Copenhagen.

"I think I'm also living in a country that gives you a higher quality of life than other countries. For me, things like the weather or it getting dark early are secondary, coming from a country where you see people dying in the emergency room of the hospital." (Appendix L)

"We get good salary. And also, like, in Denmark, I think in general, you have very good life quality." (Appendix A)

Furthermore, the participants mentioned the job opportunities they found in Denmark that were scarce or inaccessible in Mexico. They highlighted factors such as job security, improved working conditions, educational opportunities, and overall better quality of life. They appreciated the freedom to pursue their interests, engage in volunteering activities, and partake in communal events that they had not encountered in Mexico.

"Comparing my job here to being in a kitchen in Mexico, we were in heaven. We have good salaries, and in general, Denmark offers a very good quality of life." (Appendix A)

The majority of participants in our research unanimously agree that Denmark provides them with opportunities that they could never have experienced in their homeland. Moreover, they emphasize the significance of their improved quality of life while residing in Europe.

"I like the life quality and the opportunities. The wage is, uh, it is higher than I would have in Mexico, in, in my field." (Appendix J)

Moreover, the Mexicans that we interviewed say that Denmark gives them freedom and belief that they can achieve their goals and that makes our participants really want to stay in Copenhagen for a longer period and that means that they would have work for it, because as we discussed before, Danish permanent residency or citizenship is not easy to obtain. Our interviews showed that people are willing to complete all the steps the Danish government asks migrants to fulfill in order to qualify as permanent residents or citizens because they like the lifestyle they can get in the country, something that was not available to them before.

"I also, I think that the mindset is one of the things that makes me love it here (Denmark). Because everything is possible here. Like no matter what you live in, like you can fit here. So I think that is also important." (Appendix I).

"Well, now, in this moment, I would like to, to stay more, um, if I have the opportunity, even have like a Danish citizenship, and why not, uh, also become a, a Dane, right? By, by paper, like a passport and stuff." (Appendix J)

"I need to work for my residency, my permanent residency that I haven't gotten. And I haven't gotten it because I don't have all the requirements yet. Okay. Which means four years, or almost four years working full-time without a stop. So that's why it's very important for me just to get this period of time working full time. And then apply for the permanent residency, and then for the nationality, which takes a while. And I'm doing this because it is important, not because I really care about it, but it's important if something happens. So it allows me to stay here without R. Because when A [her daughter] gets 18 years old, if I just split up with R, I don't have the right to be here". (Appendix C)

In conclusion, the analysis of Mexicans in Copenhagen, their connection to their homeland, and how they interact with the host country, reveals the complexities of transnationalism, and social identity. The participants' experiences highlight the transformative power of their new environment and the potential for transnational connections that shape their sense of self within the context of being Mexican. The study shows that while the participants have undergone personal changes since leaving Mexico, their Mexican identity remains an integral part of their being, even if some participants prefer not to be perceived as part of the Mexican diaspora.

Overall, the study emphasizes the fluid and negotiated nature of social identity and the importance of considering the experiences of migrants in shaping their sense of self and connection to their homeland, as well as the participants' strong desire and determination to establish roots in Denmark while preserving their Mexican cultural identity. Despite encountering challenges and undergoing ongoing adaptation processes, our participants expressed a genuine fondness for their lives in Denmark. Their positive attitudes and resilience highlight their willingness to fully embrace Danish culture without compromising their Mexican sense of identity. While some aspects of integration may still be in progress, the participants' overall satisfaction with their lives in the host country serves as a testament to their determination and capacity to navigate the complexities of cross-cultural experiences.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this master's thesis has explored the migration experiences and connections of Mexicans in Copenhagen, focusing on filling the information gap regarding Mexicans in Northern Europe. Through qualitative interviews and analysis, the study has provided valuable insights into the reasons behind Mexican migration to Denmark and the complex interplay between their sense of identity, transnational connections, and integration into Danish society.

Overall, this research provides valuable insights into the migration experiences of Mexicans in Copenhagen, highlighting the motivations behind their decision to migrate, their connection to Mexico, and their integration into Danish society. The findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on migration and diaspora studies, emphasizing the importance of considering the unique experiences and perspectives of different migrant groups. Further research in this area can continue to deepen our understanding of migration dynamics and the complexities of identity and belonging in transnational contexts.

The analysis revealed that the participants' decision to migrate from Mexico to Denmark was primarily driven by a desire for security and a sense of freedom. The stark contrast between the insecurity experienced in Mexico and the safety and well-being found in Copenhagen played a significant role in their motivation to leave. This finding aligns with Kinnvall's concept of ontological security and highlights the importance of feeling secure and protected in one's environment.

Moreover, the fear of crime in Mexico emerged as a prevalent concern among the participants. The high levels of violence and insecurity in their homeland influenced their risk perception and contributed to their decision to seek a safer and more stable life in Denmark. The fear of crime not only affected their own well-being but also influenced their considerations for their families' future and their desire to provide a safer environment for their children.

Despite living in Denmark, the participants maintained a strong connection to Mexico and their Mexican identity. The concept of transnationalism was instrumental in understanding

their experiences, as they actively sought to preserve their Mexican culture, traditions, and sense of community. Through social media and regular communication with their families and friends in Mexico, they maintained a transnational social space that encompassed both their new lives in Denmark and their connections to their country of origin.

The analysis also highlighted the complexities of the participants' migration journey and their negotiations of identity and integration into Danish society. Their experiences were shaped by the interplay between their motivations to leave Mexico, their deep connection to their homeland, and their aspirations for stability and security in Denmark. The findings underscore the need to consider individual experiences and backgrounds when studying migration dynamics and the pursuit of ontological security.

Recognizing the enduring significance of identity and its development throughout our lives, we firmly believe in the critical importance of examining the interplay between transnationalism and identity formation among our participants. Specifically, we emphasize the need to explore how Mexicans residing in Copenhagen navigate and negotiate their identities, simultaneously embracing their Mexican heritage and integrating into Danish society. By investigating the ways in which individuals maintain a sense of Mexican identity while embracing aspects of Danish culture, we can explore and analyze the complex dynamics that take place within the Mexican diaspora according to Social Identity theory by Jenkins.

By addressing the research objectives and delving into the motivations, experiences, and connections of Mexicans in Copenhagen, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the migration process. It sheds light on the multifaceted experiences of Mexican migrants in a context where research on this specific group is limited. The study fills an important gap in the literature by focusing on Mexicans in Northern Europe, expanding the knowledge base beyond the predominantly studied Mexican diaspora in the USA.

It is important to acknowledge that the methodology that has been chosen has limitations. The sample size was relatively small, consisting of seven participants, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused specifically on Mexicans with a privileged background living in Copenhagen, and the results may only partially capture the

experiences of Mexicans residing in other contexts or individuals from different cultural backgrounds. These limitations present opportunities for future research to expand the scope and depth of understanding in this area.

The employed methodology combining hermeneutics, IPA, and inductive approach provided a comprehensive and rigorous framework for understanding the lived experiences of Mexicans living in Copenhagen. While efforts were made to mitigate biases stemming from the researcher's positionality and relationships with the participants, it is essential to acknowledge the potential influence of these biases on the research process and findings. Transparency, reflexivity, and involving multiple perspectives are important considerations when interpreting the results of this study. Future research in this area should strive for diverse and representative samples to ensure a broader understanding of the experiences of Mexicans living in different cultural contexts.

In summary, this master's thesis aimed to answer three fundamental questions: *Why do Mexicans decide to leave their homeland and migrate to Denmark? How do they keep and perceive their further connection to Mexico? and how do they understand and perceive their integration into Danish society and/or their ability to settle in Denmark?* The use of hermeneutics and IPA interviews provided a robust framework for data analysis, leading to the identification of key themes from the participants' perspectives. The findings underscored the importance of security concerns and the fear of crime in migration decisions, highlighted the strong attachment participants maintained with Mexico, and emphasized the significance of language acquisition for successful integration. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the experiences of Mexicans living in Denmark and provides insights for policymakers and practitioners working in the fields of migration, cultural integration, and cross-cultural communication.

## REFLECTIONS

The reflections chapter of this master's thesis provides an opportunity to consider alternative approaches and avenues for future research, as well as personal reflections after four months of dedicated work on this paper. The study focused on the Mexican diaspora in Denmark, aiming to address three research questions concerning the reasons for Mexican migration to Denmark, the maintenance of their connection to Mexico, and their perception of integration into Danish society. The research followed an inductive approach and utilized a theoretical framework encompassing transnationalism, ontological security, fear of crime, social identity, and diaspora.

While this study sought to contribute to the understanding of Mexicans living in Denmark, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations imposed by time constraints. Conducting a more extensive and comprehensive research investigation would have provided a deeper understanding of the Mexican diaspora in Denmark. The inclusion of a larger number of participants could have yielded a broader and more representative overview of the community. Furthermore, extending the research beyond Copenhagen to include smaller Danish towns would have allowed for a more diverse exploration of the experiences of Mexicans in Denmark, considering the unique dynamics of different locations.

To enhance future research in this field, alternative theoretical frameworks can be explored. The push-pull model by Everett S. Lee could provide valuable insights by investigating the driving forces behind Mexican migration to Denmark, considering both push factors from Mexico and pull factors from Denmark. Acculturation theory, focusing on the process of cultural adaptation, would shed light on how Mexican immigrants in Denmark navigate the assimilation process while maintaining their cultural customs. Intersectionality, a theory coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasizing the interaction and impact of multiple social identities, could be applied to examine the specific challenges faced by Mexican immigrants in Denmark, considering factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and racial or ethnic background.

During the course of this master's thesis, we gained personal insights into the distinctive experiences of different diasporas, considering that one of us belongs to the Mexican diaspora

while the other originates from Poland. This personal connection allowed us to appreciate the varying dynamics and challenges faced by different immigrant communities. For instance, within the Mexican diaspora, despite facing limitations in terms of educational and employment opportunities in Denmark, individuals generally perceive their lifestyle as significantly improved compared to their lives in Mexico. As a result, none of the Mexican participants expressed immediate intentions to return to their home country. On the other hand, Polish immigrants experience a sense of security in their country of origin, which differs from the motivations behind their migration. However, similar to the Mexican diaspora, neither of us expressed a desire to return to our respective home countries.

Through our personal involvement in this research, we discovered the striking diversity among diasporas and the profound impact of individual backgrounds and motivations on migration experiences. The contrasting situations of the Mexican and Polish diasporas shed light on the varied perceptions of lifestyle and motivations for staying abroad. That is why expanding the scope of research, a comparative analysis between the experiences of Mexican immigrants in Denmark and immigrants from a European country geographically and culturally closer to Denmark would shed light on very valuable insights. Such a comparison could uncover similarities and differences in migration routes, settlement strategies, and adaptation experiences, enriching the understanding of various immigrant groups' experiences.

It is crucial to pursue further research on this phenomenon. Another potential research avenue stemming from this study is to investigate whether Mexican diasporas in other Nordic countries or northern European regions exhibit similar patterns to those observed in Copenhagen. Specifically, the aim would be to determine if they also left their home country seeking security and have developed their identity through transnationalism, actively engaging with both Mexican and host cultures while striving to adapt to their new environment. By exploring these aspects, a comparative analysis could provide valuable insights into the experiences of Mexicans in different contexts and contribute to a broader understanding of their migration and integration dynamics.

Our initial goal was to compare distinct groups within the Mexican Diaspora and examine how their specific characteristics such as, why they chose to come to Denmark, gender, and

age influenced their behaviors, particularly regarding their connection to Mexico, adaptation to Denmark, assimilation experiences, and motivations for leaving their home country. Regrettably, due to constraints such as time limitations, participant availability, and the constraints inherent to being master's students, we were unable to realize this ambitious scope. Nonetheless, we firmly believe that this approach holds significant potential for future investigations. It would be fascinating to explore how the unique attributes within the Mexican diaspora contribute to variations in their relationship with Mexico, adaptation and assimilation processes in Denmark, and factors driving their decision to migrate from Mexico.

Furthermore, we would love for future research to dive into the influence of cultural heritage, language, and transnational experiences on the intricate processes of identity formation within this context. Through this exploration, the participants could include the second generation of Mexicans that have come to Denmark and contribute to a deeper understanding of how migrants, specifically Mexicans, in Copenhagen shape their identities in a transnational framework, ultimately offering valuable insights into the intricate interconnections between culture, migration, and personal identity.

In conclusion, this master's thesis has provided insights into the Mexican diaspora in Denmark, yet the limitations of time constraints and sample size should be acknowledged. Suggestions for future research include increasing the number of participants, and considering alternative theoretical frameworks. This master's thesis has also laid the foundation for further research on the Mexican diaspora in Denmark by expanding the research to include smaller Danish towns, and conducting comparative analyses with other immigrant groups, as well as considering the diverse characteristics and experiences within immigrant communities. By addressing these aspects, future studies can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of migration, transnationalism, and integration in the context of the Mexican diaspora. The personal reflections on this research journey highlight the complexity of migration and the importance of further understanding the experiences and perspectives of the Mexican diaspora in Denmark.

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