The View From Ecuador: Security, Insecurity, and Chaotic Geographies of U.S. Migrant Detention and Deportation

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ABSTRACT

The central argument of this dissertation is that while the immigration enforcement policies of detention and deportation are politically positioned as critical strategies for protecting U.S. homeland security, these policies actually create insecurity at multiple scales. The project, grounded in both critical geopolitics and feminist political geography, endeavors to interrogate the ‘master narratives’ behind these restrictive policies. First, the dissertation explores the historical, political, and cultural factors behind the United States’ increased use of detention and deportation, as well as the deep-seated structural factors driving Ecuadorian migration to the United States. Then, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Ecuador with deportees and family members of detained migrants, the study seeks to understand ways in which these policies are embodied both within and outside U.S. borders. It is suggested that the detention and deportation system engenders chaos – or the appearance of chaos – in numerous spaces and for various groups of individuals. Three ‘chaotic geographies’ of the system are explored in order to scrutinize the enactment of immigration policy: the operation of the system itself, detainees’ experiences, and reverberations of detention and deportation in Ecuador. Data show that inside U.S. borders, these enforcement policies interact recursively with processes of racialization and criminalization to generate insecurity for detained migrants and discipline employees to behave in particular ways. In addition, due to its inherent disorder and confusion, the detention and deportation system projects a cloak of impenetrability that hides the powerful actors behind its expansion, faults, and abuses. The dissertation then investigates how the chaos of detention and deportation extends transnationally to countries of migrant origin to produce insecurity precisely at
the scale of the home for migrants’ families, communities, and for returned migrants. In Ecuador, detention and deportation increase economic and ontological insecurity for family members and returned migrants in ways that spread throughout communities. Moreover, data from Ecuador illustrate that policymakers’ objectives of deterrence do not play out as anticipated. In this project, the author joins critical scholars in calling for an expanded understanding of the concept of security, one which incorporates multiple scales and operates across political borders.
THE VIEW FROM ECUADOR: SECURITY, INSECURITY, AND
CHAOTIC GEOGRAPHIES OF U.S. MIGRANT DETENTION AND DEPORTATION

By

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography
in the Graduate School of Syracuse University

December 2011
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I greatly appreciate the financial support that made this project possible. The bulk of the research was funded by a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Fellowship (#0802801). The Syracuse University Department of Geography generously funded key components of my doctoral journey, as did a Syracuse University Fellowship. Additional funding was awarded by various SU sources: the Maxwell School’s John L. Palmer Fund, a Goekjian Summer Research Grant, a Roscoe Martin Research Grant, and the Program on Latin America and the Caribbean.

There are so many individuals who contributed to this dissertation in various ways. First, I deeply thank all research participants in Ecuador for their trust, candor, and time. Thank you, too, to the dedicated people at the Casa del Migrante in Cuenca, especially Carmen Alvarado, whose friendship and support was essential to the success of the research. I thank the administrative staff of the SU Department of Geography for always being pleasant and helpful. Special thanks to Christine Chapman, truly the Knower of All Things. The camaraderie, commiseration, and advice of many fellow grad students and other colleagues supported me throughout this project. In particular, Kate Coddington and Lauren Martin offered fantastic feedback at key times. Many thanks to Emily Billo for her support in Ecuador and her constant cheerleading and constructive input throughout the writing of the dissertation.

I feel very fortunate to have had an excellent committee. Thank you to Jamie Winders for encouraging me to come to Syracuse in the first place. Thank you to Tom Perreault for guidance regarding research in Ecuador and for challenging me to think
through my approach. Thank you to Don Mitchell for pushing me to fully consider ideas, learn how to defend them, and for constructive comments and questions on the dissertation. Thank you to Joe Nevins for dedicated intellectual engagement and valuable detailed feedback on the dissertation. My deepest thanks to my advisor, Alison Mountz. I could not have asked for a better advisor and mentor. Somehow, Alison always sensed the necessary mix of encouragement and critique, and she has inspired me in so many ways, as a scholar, teacher, writer, and friend.

My family’s unwavering support was essential in reaching this point. Thank you to Janet and Roger Hiemstra, Dave and Rachel Hiemstra, Windi Bowditch, and Nate and Susie Bowditch for giving so much love and attention to my son that it kept my absent-mom guilt to a minimum. My mother Janet also provided nourishing food in her home and mine, and her endless energy filled in the gaps when mine gave out. My father Roger gave me sage, timely advice throughout the doctoral process, and he provided key dissertation-assembly assistance. My son Kian inspired me to power through the PhD. His laughter, games, and sense of wonder always kept my spirits and energy high. Finally, my partner Sean has been with me every step of this journey, providing whatever form of support was needed at critical moments. This included cheerleading from the earliest stages, enthusiastically picking up our life and transporting it to Ecuador, and keeping our home together and being super-Dad in the later stages. Now, on to future adventures.
PREFACE

I went to Cuenca to study human smuggling from Ecuador to the United States. My original research proposal claimed that I was going to study ways in which human smuggling impacts daily life in Ecuador: how it is embedded in the local economy, how it shapes families’ and individuals’ lives, how it is normalized in communities. The National Science Foundation (NSF), which generously funded part of this research, was concerned that the research would put me in harm’s way, and I even had to re-write my extended abstract for them, removing direct references to human smuggling. The NSF, however, need not have worried.

After arriving in Cuenca in November 2008, I volunteered at two places that concentrated on migration issues and worked with many migrants in a variety of capacities. Employees there – and seemingly most Ecuadorians with whom I engaged in even casual conversation – were very knowledgeable about human smuggling. They knew how it worked, how much it cost, why it was so profitable, dangers faced by Ecuadorians who contracted a smuggler, and the substantial payoff a successful smuggling trip had for the smuggled migrants. In fact, I had learned a lot of this basic information during a preliminary research trip to Cuenca in the summer of 2007. In my first weeks back in Ecuador for the extended research period, however, it quickly became clear that it was not going to be easy to find many people from whom I could learn more than general, common-knowledge information about human smuggling. Ecuadorians were understandably wary of someone from the United States asking about this topic. Migrants and their family members feared implicating themselves or angering their
coyote by giving detailed information about him or her. The one time a migrant did give
me the contact information for a smuggler, my calls were never returned. Suspicion of me
and my motives was simply too high. Nine months suddenly did not seem like enough
time to build the trust that would be necessary to pursue my original objectives.

Meanwhile, a way in which I could help migrants and their families materialized.
The first day that I volunteered at the Casa del Migrante (House of the Migrant), I asked
what I could do to help. Immediately, I was handed a huge binder of forms filled out
when family members of migrants detained in the United States came in asking for help.
These family members were often desperate for any information regarding detainees:
where they were, if they were okay, and if they would be deported.

This experience reminded me of the brief visit I made to the Ecuadorian consulate
in Manhattan in September 2008. While I was speaking with a consular official trying to
gather information about smuggling, she was repeatedly interrupted by calls from
detained migrants or their family members in the United States. The issue of detention
clearly dominated her work life. In Cuenca, I began to understand that it was a
phenomenon of increasing importance, for family members directly affected as well as
more generally in Ecuadorian society. In Cuenca, at the Casa del Migrante, I started
making calls, figuring out how to obtain some of the information family members sought
to the extent that it was available. Over the nine months that I was in Cuenca, I went from
doing this type of work one or two days a week to five.

The volunteer work that I did addressed a gaping hole in just one small place in
the world. But there are many places like Cuenca where family members know little or
nothing about detained migrants for extended periods of time, and where deportation engenders a host of problems. I became convinced that U.S. policymakers’ failure to consider the full range of ways in which detention and deportation reverberate in sites such as Cuenca contributes to the enactment of profoundly flawed policies. By viewing detention and deportation from beyond U.S. borders, this research illuminates the many ways in which national policies create links that are simultaneously international and deeply personal. As the reader will surmise, the project is driven by my involvement with Ecuadorian migrants and their families, a commitment to working for change in U.S. immigration policies and practices, and a desire to productively expand existing knowledge.

Perhaps my new research topic is not so far off from the intended topic. I have come to see many parallels between human smuggling and the U.S. government’s system of detention and deportation. As will become evident in this dissertation, the U.S. government changes and manipulates laws in ways that perpetuate its system of detention and deportation just as human smugglers change routes and strategies to move migrants. Both smuggling and the detention and deportation system move and manage bodies for profit. Both dehumanize migrants and treat them as objects to be controlled. Both, ultimately, contribute to a self-perpetuating cycle of human mobility tied to issues of global inequality.
CHAPTER ONE

Frameworks for Studying Immigration Policy Across Scales and Borders

The lumbering bus pulled off the busy Guayaquil street into the Dirección Nacional de Migración (Ecuadorian Migration) compound. On board were thirty-seven Ecuadorians just deported from the United States. Thirty-one men and six women stared out the dusty windows with expressions ranging from excitement to exhaustion and resignation. Most wore T-shirts and pants – whatever they had on when apprehended at the United States-Mexico border or in the U.S. interior. Behind the main building in a parking lot, several tables had been set up, and as the deportees disembarked the bus they followed instructions to line up behind them. At one table, the deportees gave their identification information and answered questions posed to them by the Migration officers, such as “How long were you in the United States? Where did you live there? Are you going to go back?” At another table, a bundle was returned to some of the deportees: any possessions (other than what they were wearing) with them when they were taken into custody. Some had not seen these things for weeks or months, however long they were detained. At another table, an Ecuadorian federal agency provided each deportee with a small nylon knapsack. In each bag were a few toiletry items, a thin blanket, and handouts about various government services. Then the deportees were given a small sandwich and a cup of soda. Most consumed this right away. They had not had much food since they were pulled out of their cells many hours ago wherever they had been detained.
I watched the process on the hot, exhaust-filled sidewalk outside the compound, kept out by a tall iron gate, along with six family members of those inside. For most of the arriving deportees, however, no one was waiting; they had not had the time or means to inform their family that they were coming back to Ecuador on that day. Many had not even known of their own departure until they were pulled out of their cell or holding room the night before. I had learned the previous day that these deportees would be arriving through the Casa del Migrante (House of the Migrant) in Cuenca where I volunteered. I had been working with the families of detainees for months, and I wanted to see a plane actually arrive. I took a bus for the four-hour ride from Cuenca to Guayaquil that morning. No one could enter the area of the airport where the flight arrived. After returnees were checked for swine flu contamination, they were bussed five minutes away to the Dirección Nacional de Migración compound where they were processed in the area I was now observing.

After about forty minutes, all those waiting outside the gate were let in, including me. There were several tearful reunions between migrants and the few family members who had somehow gotten word of their return. The list sent to selected government agencies the previous day had indicated that fifty-seven deportees would be on the flight, and no officials knew what had happened to the twenty who did not arrive. Such gaps in information were common. One official just shrugged and said they would probably come on another plane in a couple of weeks. Two people on the list who did not arrive were family members of people I had worked with at the Casa del Migrante. I called the
families to tell them that their loved one had not arrived after all; their disappointment and disbelief was palpable even over the phone.

A bus was provided free of charge by the Ecuadorian government to transport deportees who so desired to Cuenca, where riders would be able to find additional transportation if necessary. Eighteen deportees and several family members climbed aboard. Other returnees headed for the public bus station across the street to make their own way home, or dispersed into Guayaquil. The bus had space remaining, so I got on, too. When the bus pulled out into the street, there were several celebratory whoops. As we moved through Guayaquil traffic, some deportees marveled at how things had changed since they had left. Two men sitting near me had been in the United States for ten years. A man behind me said in perfect English that he had left Ecuador when he was fourteen years old, and he was now seeing the country for the first time in sixteen years.

I pulled out my cell phone to make a call. Soon, it seemed that everyone on the bus wanted to borrow it to call family and friends and announce their homecoming or to ask someone to pick them up in Cuenca. I overheard the man who had been in the United States for sixteen years asking his brother for an address and directions to his house. The man next to me struggled to remember phone numbers, but on his fifth try he got his daughter, and choked on a sob as he told her to get the family together, that he was back in Ecuador and coming home tonight. As he handed the phone back to me, he said quietly that he would only be able to recognize his children from the photographs they had sent to him. A young woman near me appeared exhausted and worried. She said she would be so happy to see her children and her mother, but her husband was still detained, and she
did not know what was happening to him. Several bus riders asked me for help in finding other friends or family still in detention in the United States. Deportation was not a new experience for everyone on the bus. In fact, it was the third for a twenty-four year old man who had arrived in the United States as a teen and attended high school before starting to work. “I will just keep trying [to go back],” he told me, “my life is there.” Another man asked me in a joking tone with an underlying seriousness, “Why don’t they like us there in your country?”

As the bus wove out of Guayaquil and up and over the mountain pass toward Cuenca, some passengers sat quietly in their seats, some slept, and others chatted to each other and to me. Some who had been caught trying to get into the United States still owed thousands of dollars for the trip. Others had lived in the United States for years and lamented all that they had been forced to abruptly leave behind: children, homes, vehicles, work equipment. One man had paid a lawyer $9000 to fight his deportation, and now he wished he had held onto the money so that he was not coming back empty-handed. The deportees talked about their detention experiences – many had struggled against anger, frustration, and desperation as their incarcerations had stretched interminably, not knowing when they would finally be deported. Some talked about inedible food, denied requests to see a doctor, cold rooms, threats from guards to be put in the “hole,” not being able to communicate with family, and the impossibility of getting information about their own case. Most complained about the flight back to Ecuador; they experienced chained hands, feet, and waists the whole flight, and I saw several individuals rubbing their wrists gingerly. Most deportees said that they would try to go
back to the United States, either immediately or as soon as the economy improved again.

One man explained, “What is there for me here? Nothing. I have to go back. I have to do it for my family.”

As the bus approached Cuenca, people began to get off at small towns and crossroads. When the bus pulled into the Cuenca terminal at 11 pm, the remaining riders quietly exited into the darkened city streets – a deafeningly unremarkable homecoming.

Introduction

The use of detention and deportation are increasingly prominent in U.S. immigration enforcement policy and practice, particularly in the post-September 11, 2001 context. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS),¹ in 2010 the U.S. government detained approximately 363,000 people and deported over 387,000 (Office of Immigration Statistics 2011).² These numbers represent substantial increases over the past three decades. For example, in 1980, the average daily detained migrant population was just over 4000 (Dow 2004). Over the next two decades this population more than quadrupled, reaching 19,485 in 2000 (Haddal and Siskin 2010). Over 30,000 migrants are detained daily today (Detention Watch Network 2010b), a 50 percent increase over 2000 levels. Deportations have risen in a parallel manner. These swelling figures are accompanied by a massive bureaucracy, including millions of employees, over 350 detention facilities, and a yearly cost of $1.7 billion (Detention Watch Network 2010a). I

¹ See Appendix A for a List of Acronyms.

² This is the fiscal year October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010.
refer to this complex assemblage as the detention and deportation system, or the “D & D system.”

Policymakers claim that detention and deportation protect U.S. homeland security – indeed, these practices are controlled by the Department of Homeland Security – by apprehending and “removing” undocumented immigrants from its territory. Belief in the deterrent value of increasingly tough enforcement measures has also been central to the growing D & D system. Policymakers invoke deterrence as both objective and justification. The above vignette from fieldwork in a region in Ecuador with high rates of migration to the United States, however, hints at deep-seated flaws in these claims of enhanced security. Instead, the vignette illustrates profound elements of insecurity engendered by the D & D system. It also suggests that assumptions regarding deterrence may not play out as anticipated.

The central argument of this dissertation is that while immigration enforcement policies like detention and deportation are politically positioned as critical strategies for protecting U.S. homeland security, these policies actually create insecurity at multiple scales, both within and outside U.S. borders. My fieldwork demonstrates that inside U.S. borders, the D & D system interacts recursively with processes of racialization and criminalization to generate insecurity for detained migrants as well as system employees. I posit that such insecurity ultimately contributes to the (further) destabilization of the general U.S. public’s sense of security. Outside U.S. borders, as illustrated by the opening vignette, insecurity is generated precisely at the scale of the home for migrants’ families, communities, and for returned migrants. What’s more, my research in Ecuador
suggests that goals of deterrence behind detention and deportation actually contribute to a host of unintended, even antithetical consequences. My contention that these enforcement policies ultimately fail to meet stated objectives of bolstering homeland security raises questions regarding *unstated* policy objectives and influences behind these practices. The dissertation, therefore, also explores the historical, political, economic, and cultural factors behind the increased use of detention and deportation.

In presenting the overarching argument regarding the relationship between immigration enforcement and security, I suggest that the D & D system produces insecurity through myriad *chaotic geographies*, and that through attention to these chaotic geographies one can scrutinize the enactment of immigration policy. *Chaos* is defined as “a state of utter confusion” and *chaotic* as “completely confused or disordered” (“Chaos” 2001). The D & D system, as I show in this dissertation, creates chaos – or, I pointedly add, the appearance of chaos – in multiple spaces and for various groups of individuals. Due to its inherent disorder and confusion, the D & D system projects a cloak of impenetrability that hides its faults, abuses, and inefficiencies. Chaos thus produces outcomes that prove advantageous to the state. As Eyal Weizman (2007, 8) writes regarding the intentionally disordered settlement strategy pursued by the Israeli government, “Chaos has its peculiar structural advantages.” A ‘chaotic geography’ of the D & D system, I propose, is a particular way in which chaos is spatialized and temporalized.³ I endeavor to pierce the opacity of the system by identifying and scrutinizing its chaotic geographies. I also use the concept as a heuristic mechanism to

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³ Mountz (2010, xxix) has previously used the term *chaotic geographies* in a different, if related, meaning: “Borders exist as walls only in the geographical imagination. In the practice of border enforcement, the border is enacted through more dispersed, chaotic geographies.”
provide structure for my inquiry, specifically exploring three chaotic geographies: the operation of the system itself, detainees’ experiences, and reverberations of detention and deportation in Ecuador.

Finally, in making this argument about the relationship between homeland security and insecurity, I join critical scholars in calling for an expanded understanding of the concept of security, one which incorporates multiple scales, and, I insist, operates across political borders. In orchestrating policies meant to operate on specific populations in broadly constructed locations (i.e. ‘Mexico’ or ‘Latin America’), policymakers fail to consider the existence of alternative understandings of security. I show that Ecuadorians’ understanding of security, in contrast to that which is dominant in the United States, includes the right to circulate across nation-state borders. By considering security across simultaneously transnational and local scales, this project contributes to the concept of human security as conceptualized by feminist political geographers.

The remainder of this chapter establishes the theoretical and conceptual foundation of the dissertation’s overarching argument regarding security and insecurity. I begin by outlining the epistemological framework guiding my approach to the study of immigration enforcement policy. It is a framework grounded in a fusion of critical geopolitics and feminist geopolitics in a way that enables the interrogation of the state and its policies from multiple scales of analysis, with attention to groups frequently ignored during the scrutiny of political power. The chapter then explores the “master narrative” of homeland security, particularly its implications for restrictive immigration control policies. Then, I draw on feminist political geography to explain human security,
a more expansive and analytically useful understanding of security that centers the
everyday experiences of people most affected by policy as it is implemented. Next, I
sketch the major contributions of this project. The chapter concludes with an outline of
the remainder of the dissertation.

**Epistemological Entry to Migration Policy Across Borders**

Through the opening vignette, my inquiry into the U.S. D & D system began in a
place that rarely figures into policymakers’ imaginations: everyday life in a country of
migrant origin. This project’s focus on Ecuador yields a nuanced understanding of spatial
reverberations of policy across scales. It also distills ways in which immigration
enforcement policies and practices are embodied outside of U.S. national borders. This
approach thus emphasizes attention to multiple scales of analysis within and beyond state
borders. In so doing, it contributes to disruption of the “territorial trap,” a term used to
denote a traditional geopolitical understanding of the state in which state power is bound
to fixed territorial limits and a clear division exists between the national and the
international (Agnew 1995; Glassman 1999).

The project is epistemologically grounded in both critical geopolitics and feminist
geopolitics. Critical geopolitics, which developed as a subdiscipline of political
geography in the 1980s and 1990s, intentionally stepped away from geography’s
traditional state-centric approach to geopolitics. Dalby (1994, 595) defines critical
geopolitics as “the critical and poststructuralist intellectual practices of unraveling and

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4 Some excerpts included in this section and in the “Feminist geopolitics and human security” section are
drawn from a piece I co-authored with Alison Mountz (Hiemstra and Mountz 2011).
deconstructing geographical and related disguises, dissimulations, and rationalisations of power.” The field draws on debates within international relations, critical social theory, political economy, and postmodern theory (Dalby 1991; Dodds 2001). Critical geopoliticians take a genealogical and deconstructivist approach to political power that draws on the work of social theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida (Dalby 1991; Gilmartin and Kofman 2004). Practitioners of critical geopolitics approach political power as a negotiation for spatial control, and focus on the role of discourse in building power (Dalby 1991; ÓTuathail 1996; Dodds 2001). The conceptual work of critical geopolitics has often sought to expose the “master narratives” of political relationships – the particular scriptings of global space by powerful intellectuals and institutions – and to uncover the roles played by powerful intellectuals and institutions in their writing (ÓTuathail 2006, 1996).

Feminist geopolitical scholarship contends that both traditional and critical geopolitical inquiry produce a top-down, disembodied view of state strategy focused on highly visible elite leaders rather than the people most affected by the policies they enact (Sharp 2000; Hyndman 2001b, 2004; Smith 2001; Gilmartin and Kofman 2004). It draws on feminist work highlighting the arbitrariness of the division of social realms into public and private and asserts that “the political is personal” (Enloe 1989). Feminist geopolitical scholars challenge the idea of “capital P Political” as politics that operate only in formal spheres (Kofman and Peake 1990), and they turn attention to “little p” political engagement emanating from intimate sites of daily life (e.g., Cope 2004).
Feminist geographers, and feminist geopolitical scholars in particular, recognize that it is important to link scales to specific places (Brown and Staeheli 2003a), and to focus on the local (Dalby 1994; Cope 2002). Accordingly, they deliberately consider scales previously ignored in political geographic analysis such as the body, the household, the locality, and the supranational organization (Marston 2000; Marston and Smith 2001). Hyndman (2004, 315) famously calls for the redefinition of scales of inquiry to those “finer and coarser than that of the nation-state and global economy.” By incorporating this range of scales into political analysis, feminist geographers have significantly destabilized traditional understandings of ‘the state’ (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Brown and Staeheli 2003b; England 2003; Desbiens, Mountz, and Walton-Roberts 2004; Hyndman 2004). Secor (2001, 193) asserts that “feminist approaches show how the (imminently political) categories of public and private, global and local, formal and informal, ultimately blur, overlap and collapse into one another in the making of political life.” Importantly, feminist geopolitics pushes analyses of political power into the routine, often ignored spaces and places of daily life. In so doing, it allows for the study of ways in which state policies actually develop in practice, which do not necessarily correspond to policymakers’ expectations. As Mountz (2010, 35) notes, “Written policies…tell only partial stories – idealized versions of what might be or what should happen.” Inquiries that do not go beyond these partial stories produce what Sparke (2005, xvi) names “anemic geographies,” academic geographies that conceal and homogenize the messy material realities of the human subjects under consideration. Feminist geopolitics answers this shortfall by calling for embodied, multi-scalar analyses of political policy. Embodied
political analyses endeavor to identify and understand how laws and discourses associated with a particular policy (and the state) are given form, become lived experiences, and shape people’s everyday realities.

This project is anchored in both of these subdisciplines. Critical geopolitics guides me to scrutinize the broader sets of power relations in which immigration enforcement policies are embedded, and to deconstruct the “master narrative” of homeland security – a powerful scripting of national belonging built on exclusive notions of home and the othering of immigrants. Feminist geopolitics questions the master narrative of homeland security as gendered, racialized, and classed. It also provides tools to push my inquiry of immigration policy beyond the scripting of powerful intellectuals and institutions, into the routine, often ignored spaces and places of daily life. I methodologically approach these tasks through qualitative, ethnographic research that traces detention and deportation policy from the United States to Ecuador. Utilizing the methods of participant observation, interviews, and document analysis, the research examines the embodiment of policy in the United States and in Ecuador, for a range of individuals and at multiple scales. Data call attention to the relationship between U.S. state discourses of homeland security and personal experiences of insecurity. My research thus contributes to both critical geopolitical and feminist geopolitical scholarship, as well as geographical inquiry and migration studies more generally, by extending consideration of political power and policy beyond the territorial borders of the policy-making country, to the scales of the individual, home, and community in a country of migrant origin. This epistemological grounding, I suggest, ultimately allows for an alternative understanding of security.
**Homeland (In)security and Migration**

The phrase *homeland security* is a powerful, hegemonic concept – a master narrative – in public and political imagination today, an apt and beguiling cloak for particular geopolitical and domestic maneuvers. The concept of national *security* (and the need to protect it) has long been invoked as rationale for particular U.S. geopolitical strategies at home and abroad. Indeed, the invocation of security provides policies with an air of untouchability. As Nevins (2008, 173) notes, “Security in the United States is what some have referred to as a ‘God-word’ – something universally embraced, and insufficiently questioned – at least among supporters of the status quo.” The concept of *homeland* was introduced into the modern political imagination more recently. While the word “homeland” was used in government and military forums in the 1990s, it emerged as a popular signifier for the United States in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks as part of the Bush administration’s aggressive, reactionary response (Kaplan 2003). The concept, posits Walters (2004), is linked to changing ideas of governance in the Western world, a shift in which “the relations between citizenship, state, and territory” are reworked in ways that rationalize “a series of security measures in the name of a particular conception of home” (Walters 2004, 241).5

The fusion of *homeland* with *security* has yielded a phrase heavy with meaning that works to govern populations by shaping perceptions and guiding behavior in

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5 Walters (2004) introduces the concept of “domopolitics” to mark this contemporary shift in governance frameworks, from the political economic approach of governing the state like a household to a new model of governing the state like a home.
particular ways (Walters 2004). As interpreted through the epistemological lens guiding this dissertation, “homeland security” has become a powerful master narrative, scripted and manipulated by authors of statecraft. In this dissertation, the term is not meant to be static or monolithic. Instead, it is the amalgamation and container of a host of evolving conceptualizations of and concerns regarding nation, belonging, home, and safety.

Likewise, I do not understand the Department of Homeland Security to be a homogenous agency acting of one mind and with unchanging purpose. Instead, it must be recognized that the DHS has multiple components and operates according to a range of objectives.

Especially germane to the discussion here is the way in which homeland security is understood in opposition to the excludable foreigner, a role which in contemporary times is easily filled by the figure of the immigrant (Honig 1998). While the new dominance of homeland security discourse can in many ways be understood as an ideological replacement for Cold War anti-communism (De Genova 2009), unique to this rhetoric is the way in which it exists in juxtaposition to a new sense of insecurity derived from the fear of the “other” within U.S. borders (Kaplan 2003; Ackleson 2005; De Genova 2009). What’s more, as Walters (2004, 247) has argued, westerners’ sense of insecurity “is bound up with themes of mobility: it is the movement, the circulation, the presence of unauthorized bodies which have violated the borders of the nation-state.” Immigrants are, therefore, always already othered by and instill a sense of insecurity in ‘Americans’ by virtue of the “geographical transgression” implied by their very presence in a particular territory (Nevins 2002, 121).
Working in tandem with this sense of insecurity, the concept of a homeland invokes a place of belonging to which all are not included – an exclusive notion of home (Kaplan 2003). As Hyndman and Mountz (2008, 255) write, “the nationalistic production of home requires a constitutive outside, something against which home is defined. Migrants occupy these spheres ‘outside’ national belonging.” Homeland therefore implies opposition to the foreign, and “has an exclusionary effect that underwrites a resurgent nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment and policy” (Kaplan 2003, 87). What’s more, by implicitly differentiating between native-born Americans and those whose ‘true’ home is foreign, the homeland is a racialized category, adding another marker for differentiating the other (Kaplan 2003; Nevins 2008). Particular ideas of family are also implicit in homeland security. Cowen and Gilbert (2008), for example, examine how the discourse and imagery central to the United States’ “war on terror” centers and idealizes the white, heteronormative family, while simultaneously ignoring, destroying, or belittling families outside this ideal. Immigrant families – both within the United States and in migrant origin countries – either do not figure into these homeland security-driven imaginaries, or are envisioned in opposition to the (North) American family.

Portrayed as necessary for protecting the (white) American nation, family and home, immigration and border regulation are integral components of the master narrative of homeland security. There is an extended history in the United States of representing restrictive immigration control measures as necessary to protect the nation from threat (Nevins 2008). Particularly in the post-9/11 context, however, homeland security has been performed so successfully by policymakers as to legitimate increasingly harsh
immigration and border enforcement actions, despite the fact that claims that these actions prevent terrorist acts are unsubstantiated and exaggerated (Nevins 2008). Indeed, as Bialasiewicz, Campbell, Elden, Graham, Jeffrey, and Williams (2007) emphasize, there is a deeply performative element to homeland security: the characteristic of stating a particular reality and then bringing that reality into existence through discourse and action (Butler 1997). As I demonstrate in this dissertation, detention and deportation bolster the performance of the homeland security narrative, but they also subsequently create numerous insecurities inside and outside the United States.

The master narrative of homeland security generates a persistent anxiety about the relationship between national and international insecurity, an anxiety that is harnessed to justify expansion of the ways in which states govern. Kaplan (2003, 90) writes, “Although homeland security may strive to cordon off the nation as a domestic space from external foreign threats, it is actually about breaking down the boundaries between inside and outside, about seeing the homeland in a state of constant emergency from threats within and without.” This entails a somewhat paradoxical correlation between securing the homeland and pushing out power abroad (Kaplan 2003; Walters 2004; Bialasiewicz et al. 2007). As Bialasiewicz et al. (2007, 416) contend, “the US needs to ensure the security of its homeland from within as much as without, to treat home as away.” At the same time, they observe that contemporary security strategy “also involves the US treating away as home, or at least, as a concern” (416). In this dissertation, I aim to bring an alternative perspective to this relationship between security and insecurity at “home” and “away” through my focus on detention and deportation.
**Feminist Geopolitics and Human Security**

Feminist geopolitics offers powerful tools for exploring links between security, insecurity, fear, the “homeland,” and abroad. While critical geopolitics has challenged traditional understandings of security since its inception, it has also always had a “parasitical relationship with mainstream geopolitics” (Coleman 2009, 905) that maintains focus on the state. Feminist geopolitical scholars, on the other hand, insist that attention to additional scales is essential for more holistic readings of security (Mountz 2004; Hyndman 2007a; Staeheli and Nagel 2008). As Hyndman (2007a, 249) writes, “Security is as much about people, households, and livelihoods as about state sovereignty or global economy.” Feminist geopolitical work urges the adoption of a human-centered idea of security, as opposed to a state-centered one (Hyndman 2001b, 2004; Smith 2001). Accordingly, in this dissertation I aim to hold the concept of human security in tension with homeland security.

My use of this term requires a degree of reclamation. Human security, as defined by the United Nations in 1994, was intended to forward an idea of human welfare that encompassed “economic security, food security, health, and environmental security” on the international geopolitical stage (Hyndman 2007a, 241). This definition certainly agrees with the feminist geopolitical reading of it. In a 2007 piece, however, Hyndman (2007a) reviews and critiques how the concept has been co-opted and misused, particularly in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Hyndman (2007a, 241) points out that the United Nation’s human security is “theoretically an expression of global citizenship
based on human rights’ which should entitle all people at risk to protection, and may therefore include intervention in countries unable or unwilling to protect their own citizens. Hyndman argues that in practice, however, states’ recognition of and respect for this idea of human security often clashes with assertions of state sovereignty, and it can be used as a convenient justification for foreign intervention by powerful states, often to thwart migration. After 9/11, this potentially transformative idea of human security quickly took a backseat on the world stage to state security, as countries like the United States unapologetically shaped policies to defend their own citizens from fear of terrorism (perhaps more so than from terrorism itself) (Hyndman 2007a). The resulting policies privilege the citizens of one’s own country over those of other countries, making realization of the global citizen impossible and intensifying global hierarchies (Hyndman 2007a).

Human security as explicated in this dissertation, in contrast, works to break down global hierarchies and does not privilege state sovereignty over individual rights and experiences. It deliberately draws attention to everyday lives instead of high-stakes political actors and their maneuvers (Dodds 2001; Hyndman 2007a). My use of human security is thus intended to disrupt the master narrative of homeland security by privileging the individual human being over state-centric ideas of home. Human security allows for the factoring in of spaces and places beyond national borders, in Ecuador, and the incorporation of multiple scales into analysis, such as the body, family, and community.
It is through this intentionally disruptive lens of human security that I view the relationship between homeland security and immigration enforcement. Through this lens, it immediately becomes clear that insecurity does not exist only for those included in the homeland, as a natural counterpart to the anxiety-inducing discourse of homeland security. Insecurity is also produced for the populations and places targeted as a consequence of these anxieties (Pain and Smith 2008). As Kaplan (2003, 87) writes, “At a time when the Patriot Act has attacked and abrogated the rights of so-called aliens and immigrants, when the U.S. government can detain and deport them in the name of homeland security, the notion of the homeland itself contributes to making the life of immigrants terribly insecure.”

Here, then, we have two different understandings of security and insecurity that exist in contradiction to each other. Hyndman (2007b, 367) posits, “Insecurity is expressed at different scales and from multiple perspectives: migrants, for example, at once fear the states at whose borders they arrive and yet embody insecurity in the imagination of those same states.” Staeheli and Nagel (2008), for example, begin their analysis of security from the perspective of British Arabs and Arab Americans experiencing securitization efforts in Britain and the United States. They note that as security rose to the fore as a concern of states in the post-9/11 aftermath, it also became a central concern of groups targeted by governments’ actions. Immigrants’ and Muslims’ understanding of security, however, was clearly different than that espoused by states: “Security, from their perspective, seemed to be framed in terms of safety and the preservation of rights” (787). Staeheli and Nagel (2008, 794) point to the paradox that
“enhanced security measures enhance their feelings of insecurity.” Scholars have also pointed out that targeted groups’ experiences of insecurity are often anchored in daily life, in the restriction of everyday activities resulting from intensified state policing activities (Staeheli and Nagel 2008; Coleman 2009). Consideration of multiple scales, therefore, highlights the paradoxical relationship between security and insecurity.

Fear is an important component of the master narrative of homeland security (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Hyndman 2007b). Scholarship on fear tends to focus on and assume universality of the fears of people in dominant states, despite that fact that “the harm and devastation wrought by the war on/of terror is far greater outside the west” (Pain 2009, 473; 2010; Pain and Smith 2008). Feminist geopolitical scholarship draws attention to the role fear plays in propelling and justifying extreme measures purportedly in defense of homeland security. Mobilization of the powerful emotion of fear, cautions Hyndman (2007b, 369), demands critical attention:

- Just as fear creates grounds for suspicion, it needs to be treated, both intellectually and politically, with suspicion. Unraveling the antecedents of fear is crucial to keep governments and other protagonists of nationalism in check. Without constant vigilance that probes the production of fear and crisis, both of these commodities will be used creatively and strategically to justify violence and exclusion.

Pain (2009) argues that contemporary public and academic discourses of fear, including those within critical geopolitics, tend to draw on and also contribute to a constructed
“globalized fear metanarrative.” This metanarrative does not reflect “the ways that fear is felt, patterned and practiced in everyday life” (2009, 467), leads to disembodied understandings of fear, and contributes to an artificial (and counterproductive) local/global binary. It also erroneously promotes a universalized view of fear, assuming that everyone experiences fear similarly “with little regard to social or spatial difference” (Pain 2009, 471). This project, in contrast, centers fear generated by detention and deportation in a country of migrant origin, with the goal of embodied, nuanced understanding rooted in everyday life. In so doing, it pulls attention to experiences of fear beyond those privileged in the master narrative of homeland security.

Through my exploration of chaotic geographies of detention and deportation, it becomes clear that the insecurity and fear they produce are both instruments and outcomes of state power. In this understanding of the duality of insecurity, narratives of homeland security appear inadequate and lacking in scalar depth. The concept of human security, in contrast, is capable of considering multiple scales, groups, and spaces at once. It is, therefore, comparatively rich in its analytical, political, and discursive potential.

**Contributions**

This dissertation makes a number of significant contributions to geographical inquiry, immigration and border studies, and policy-making. Here, I highlight four. First, true to its feminist geopolitical approach, this research broadens the places and scales of analysis employed when considering the state and the ways in which policies work. By tracing the effects of detention and deportation outside the United States, it becomes
evident that policies act transnationally, and reverberate in profoundly geopolitical ways. The embodied approach to migration policy I employ also expands knowledge of how political power works in everyday lives, beyond elite actors. In addition, by studying the embodiment of U.S. policy in a country of migrant origin, this project forwards understanding of ways in which scales overlap. For example, while immigration policy is made at a national scale in the United States, it can be experienced at the local scale in Ecuador. Furthermore, by looking at U.S. policy through the experiences of Ecuadorians, I aim to pry open the typical inward focus of academic analyses of the state and state policies.

Second, this research contributes to work on the changing spatialities of immigration governance. Recent scholarship on migration has shown how immigration policing activities have intensified at or near state territorial borders (Núñez and Heyman 2007; Stuesse 2010) as well as how immigration enforcement has moved deep into countries’ interiors (Mountz 2004, 2010; Coleman 2007b; Winders 2007; Varsanyi 2008). Geopolitical research in particular argues that border enforcement has become disengaged from state territorial borders per se, and that immigration enforcement specifically is now about shaping migrants’ everyday activities and mobilities once they have settled in their countries of destination (Nevins 2002; Coleman 2007a, 2007b, forthcoming; Núñez and Heyman 2007; Varsanyi and Nevins 2007; Winders 2007; Coleman 2009; Hiemstra 2010; Mountz 2010; Stuesse 2010; Martin forthcoming).

Critical and feminist geopolitical scholars have also noted states’ efforts to push migration enforcement out beyond their own borders, and they have deconstructed the
claim that nation-states are simply exercising their sovereign rights to protect national borders when they carry out exclusionary migration policies. For instance, Collyer (2007) discusses the “externalization” of migration policy as states establish regulation points in places like foreign airports and embassies. Similarly, Hyndman and Mountz (2008) examine the ways in which states are preventing asylum seekers from entering spaces from which they could make refugee claims. Mountz (2011) has also studied how migrants are increasingly detained in transit rather than in destination countries. Coleman (2007a, 2007b, 2009) points out that immigration enforcement does not follow the supposedly neat territorial lines demarcated by national borders.

While this research has made great strides in problematizing a deep-seated “methodological nationalism” in migration studies (Ellis 2006), I argue that there remains much to be said about how borders are being pushed outwards, as well as specifically about the effects of immigration enforcement policies in sites not within the state enacting them. The existing literature critically approaches immigration enforcement from within and at the borders of the policy-making country. However, there is very little existing research on ways in which immigration enforcement policies made by destination countries are reflected in countries of migrant origin. My project works to fill this gap by considering the actual – and not just the assumed or imagined – spatial reach of these immigration enforcement policies beyond the place of detention, and outside U.S. borders.

Third, this project is unique in its detailed attention to the extra-territorial effects of detention and deportation. Certainly, states executing such policies have done virtually
no research into these effects. Fernandes (2007, 102) notes, “There has yet to be an investigation by the U.S. government into what happens to deportees once they arrive in the recipient country.” There are, however, a small number of academics and journalists who have investigated migrants’ post-deportation experiences in their country of origin. For example, Collyer (forthcoming) conducted empirical research in Sri Lanka with migrants returned from the United Kingdom, focusing on the process through which the United Kingdom determines deportation. Coutin (2007, 2010a, 2010b, 2011) has done work in El Salvador with migrants deported from the United States regarding their experiences of detention, deportation and exile. Peutz (2010) completed a study of Somalis deported from the United States to Somaliland. Golash-Boza recently conducted research in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Jamaica with U.S. deportees (personal communication with author). My research contributes to and extends this work by focusing not just on deported migrants, but also on their households, broader networks, and communities.

A fourth contribution made by this dissertation is disruption of the master narrative of homeland security in immigration policymaking. I do this by bringing attention to the actual effects of policy, beyond the limits of false assumptions or desired results. Also, by focusing on lives and daily realities in Ecuador, I provide a sketch of migrant detainees’ home communities, families, responsibilities, and pressures. Policymakers and the general U.S. public rarely have a sense of the realities migrants faced or will face in their origin countries, nor any perception of their familial connections and responsibilities. As Mountz (2004, 337) writes, “the way in which the
state sees and categorizes smuggled migrants has powerful material ramifications.” Consequently, it is relatively easy to ignore or dismiss possible repercussions of detention and deportation for migrants, their families, and communities. By giving them a history, a place, and a voice, this project pulls migrant bodies and spaces into the realm of homeland security considerations. Finally, through my deployment of an embodied, multi-scalar analysis of immigration policy, I contribute to a more inclusive and humane understanding of security.

Dissertation Outline

While the overarching argument regarding the relationship between homeland security and human insecurity is woven throughout the dissertation, each chapter advances this argument in particular ways. Chapter Two explores the history of the detention and deportation system, emphasizing the constant centrality of the master narrative of security. Chapter Three provides critical background information regarding Ecuadorian migration to the United States, as well as the structural context necessary to scrutinize the relationship between security and insecurity in a country of migrant origin. Chapter Four elaborates the project’s methodological approach: the use of ethnography to study embodied experiences of insecurity at multiple scales both in and outside of US borders. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven explore three chaotic geographies of the D & D system. Chapter Five focuses on the chaos inherent to the structure and operation of the system, and the individual behaviors and emotions of the employees behind that operation. Chapter Six maps ways in which chaos is experienced temporally and spatially
by detained migrants. I contend that these mappings illustrate how the appearance of chaos works to conceal alternatives to deportation from detainees as well as obscure powerful drivers of and flaws within the growing system. Chapter Seven examines the extension of chaos outside the D & D system and beyond U.S. borders, to Ecuador. I show that the chaotic structure and operation of the system work transnationally to generate insecurity in a country of migrant origin. Below are more detailed explanations of each chapter.

Chapter Two aims to answer, in part, the deportee’s question in the opening vignette, “Why don’t they like us there in your country?” It presents a genealogy of the expanding migrant detention and deportation system in the United States, within the broader context of immigration and border enforcement policies. While the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 initiated the contemporary period of rapid growth in the system, a historical perspective shows that the current surge represents the acceleration of a trend already firmly under way. Indeed, the master narrative of security has been consistently invoked as justification for restrictive and punitive immigration policies throughout U.S. history. This genealogy also illustrates the longstanding centrality of processes of racialization and criminalization to U.S. immigration enforcement policies, particularly to the contemporary D & D system. I discuss the “immigration industrial complex,” the assemblage of groups and individuals who benefit in various ways from migrant detention and deportation, as another key driver of the expanding D & D system. Finally, Chapter Two explores the social control objectives behind U.S. immigration enforcement strategy, particularly those behind the increasing emphasis on deterrence. I
build on previous scholarly work to suggest that the concept of deterrence presupposes that policies like detention and deportation reverberate extra-territorially in ways that discipline potential migrants.

Chapter Three explores the history, trends, and contemporary realities of Ecuadorian international migration, and illustrates the profound structural embeddedness of migration in Ecuador. Throughout this history, I show how U.S. policies have played a critical role in the development of Ecuadorian migration patterns to the United States. Ecuadorian international migration has steadily increased since the 1950s. Rates of migration spiked dramatically in the late 1990s with a severe economic and political crisis. Today, approximately 10 percent of Ecuador’s total population of fourteen million lives abroad, divided primarily between the United States and Europe. Migration shapes Ecuadorian cultural, economic, and political life in critical ways. The majority of Ecuadorians in the United States are from the Andean provinces of Azuay and Cañar, where fieldwork for this project was conducted. In this area of Ecuador, therefore, the ways in which U.S. policies reverberate extra-territorially are particularly visible. Today, hardening enforcement policies – propelled by the concept of deterrence and goals of social control – critically influence Ecuadorian migration, albeit often in unintended ways which are antithetical to stated policy objectives.

Chapter Four details the methodological approach that arose out of the epistemological framework outlined in Chapter One. I conducted an ethnography of detention and deportation policy and practices, a project that is complementary to ethnographies of the state. My approach employs and builds on the feminist strategy of
embodiment. Embodiment as I deploy it here allows entry to both extra-territorial and local scales simultaneously, and pays attention to scales other than the state. Importantly, it centers the experiences of people most affected by policy, including people beyond U.S. borders. I propose an extension of embodiment called *periscoping* that allows one to get a sense of embodied experiences that may be out of direct lines of sight. The chapter then elaborates on my fieldwork, conducted primarily in the city of Cuenca, which acts as the regional center for the high-migration provinces of Azuay and Cañar. I explain specific methods used: participant observation, interviews, and document and media analysis. In order to expand existing conceptualizations of researcher subjectivity, I then discuss two personal aspects of my fieldwork experience which influenced both the conduct of research and the knowledge produced. This discussion of researcher subjectivity is also important because it further illustrates how embodied experiences are powerful analytical tools for geopolitical analyses, particularly in the conduct of an ethnography of policy.

In Chapter Five, I endeavor to pierce the apparent impenetrability of the detention and deportation system, while at the same time imparting a sense of its irreparable turmoil. I begin by *periscoping in* to the system’s chaotic organization and operation by puzzling through the difficulty of searching for detained migrants from Ecuador. Then, I explain migrants’ apprehension to deportation trajectories within the system. While this process can generally be understood as a series of three steps, I demonstrate that there are frequent, unpredictable twists and variations. I also emphasize the role of personal subjectivity on the part of system employees in determining how this process plays out
for each migrant. I argue that the pervasive criminalization and othering of migrants performed by the D & D system interacts with the master narrative of homeland security to critically shape employees’ perceptions of and interactions with migrants. Paradoxically, I suggest, the chaos inherent to the system also reinforces employees’ sense that migrants make them less secure. In other words, the insecurity created by detention and deportation haunts and disciplines system personnel.

Chapter Six details how the chaos of detention and deportation creates insecurity for detained migrants. I argue that the pivotal drivers of the growing system discussed in Chapter Two (the racialized construction of migrants as security threats and criminals, and the view of migrant bodies as sources of revenue) critically shape detainees’ experiences. Important scholarly work, investigative journalism, and non-governmental organization reports in the United States and elsewhere have examined and identified profound problems in practices and conditions of migrant detention and deportation. I review and add to this work, “mapping” how detainees experience insecurity. I elaborate in particular on the procedural chaos between apprehension and deportation, the isolation imposed on detainees through the system’s structure and operation, and the time and space geographies of detention paths as detainees experience frequent yet unpredictable transfers. Actual maps of transfer paths starkly illustrate the uneven, illogical time-space geographies experienced by migrants. These mappings show that chaos works to mask the driving forces behind the D & D system and to ensure detainees’ deportation.

Chapter Seven illustrates that the rationale of homeland security underlying the detention and deportation system increases fear and human insecurity in Ecuador
precisely at the scale of the home. I identify and scrutinize ways in which detention and deportation come to be embodied beyond U.S. borders, infiltrating and shaping everyday lives and livelihoods in a country of migrant origin. I explore how detention violently alters the tenor of a migrant’s absence largely due to the isolation imposed on detainees and the chaotic organization of the system. Then, I show that both detention and deportation increase economic and ontological insecurity for family members and returned migrants in Ecuador, and I suggest that these insecurities spread throughout communities. Chapter Seven then considers policymakers’ objective to deter migration alongside the reverberations of detention and deportation. I conclude that the deterrence paradigm underlying these policies is inherently flawed.

Chapter Eight, the final chapter, offers some concluding thoughts on chaos, security, and the state. Then, I suggest new lines of inquiry opened by this study.
 CHAPTER TWO

Genealogy of the Detention and Deportation System

Introduction

“Why don’t they like us there in your country?” This was a question posed to me by an Ecuadorian deportee in the vignette opening Chapter One. Before his deportation, this man had likely spent weeks, if not months, in numerous detention facilities, after either a failed attempt to enter the United States or after some period of time laboring in the United States. In this chapter, I trace the genealogy of the detention and deportation system, and in so doing also provide a nuanced answer to the deportee’s query, as it relates to his experience of the United States’ “dislike” of him through his incarceration and expulsion.

This genealogy reveals that master narratives of national security tightly interlock with racializing and criminalizing processes. These narratives have served as justification for immigration enforcement policies, including detention and deportation, throughout U.S. history. We see how these discourses and policies have masked the ways in which detention and deportation work as mechanisms of social control over both immigrant and non-immigrant populations. Employers have been a primary group desiring this control over immigrants; maintaining them in a vulnerable state of “illegality” keeps their labor cheap, flexible, and compliant (De Genova 2002, 2004; Nevins 2002; Welch 2002; Varsanyi 2008). Detention and deportation have been critical elements in the assertion of this control over racialized, criminalized immigrants. Coleman (2008, 1109) posits that
deportation in particular can be seen as a Foucauldian, biopolitical mode of governance. A technique of the spectacular enforcement of immigration law, it “performs the ‘everywhereness’ of the immigration bureaucracy” (Coleman 2008, 1110) and operates by placing immigrants on “perpetual probation” (Coleman 2008, 1109). Scholars have shown that the potential for deportation is critical to the establishment and perpetuation of illegality from the earliest days of labor migration to the United States. The actual number of deportees, 387,242 in 2010 (Office of Immigration Statistics 2011), is small in comparison to the total number of undocumented immigrants living in the United States: around 11.2 million in 2010 (Pew Hispanic Center 2011). The ever-present threat of deportation, however, generally prevents immigrant laborers from agitating for higher wages and improved work conditions. As De Genova (2004, 161) contends, “some are deported in order that most may ultimately remain (un-deported) – as workers, whose particular migrant status has been rendered ‘illegal’.”

The control functions of these punitive practices go beyond their production of vulnerable workers. The incarceration and expulsion of immigrants also work to reinforce public perceptions of them as outsiders and criminals by linking to exclusive notions of home and heightening non-immigrants’ sense that national security is endangered (Chacón 2007; Coleman 2008). In this work, the detention and deportation system can be understood as a disciplinary apparatus, or a form of governmentality, exacting particular behaviors across broad segments of populations without direct state involvement.
(Foucault 1979, 1991). So while detention and deportation certainly work very directly—intimately, even—on immigrant bodies by forcing them into (sites of detention) and out of certain places (U.S. territory), these practices work indirectly to influence non-immigrant imaginaries of immigrants and immigrants’ relationship with national territory.

The remainder of the chapter advances chronologically through the last two centuries to trace the development of the United States’ detention and deportation system, which was built according to the political, social, and economic dynamics of particular eras. This genealogy illustrates how the master narrative of national security has been deployed to justify and reinforce the system throughout its history, while ongoing processes of criminalization and racialization of immigrants contribute to a public imagination in which detention and deportation of targeted groups seem appropriate. I also discuss how these practices become insulated by a high degree of legal exceptionalism (insulation from regulation by the courts and exemption from rights protections afforded by criminal law), which is consistently reinforced through court decisions since passage of the earliest deportation laws.

The existing architecture truly began to solidify in the 1980s and 90s with the extensive broadening of the government’s power to detain and the dramatic upsurge in detention capacity. The state’s response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 ushered in the system in its current spatially expansive form. This expansion is propelled

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6 As I have argued elsewhere, illegality can also be understood as operating as a technique of neoliberal governmentality, particularly at the local scale, working to mask contradictions of the current neoliberal economic order and disciplining immigrant labor (Hiemstra 2010).
by the growing power and influence of the immigration industrial complex, a term used
to describe the “confluence of public and private sector interests in the criminalization of
undocumented migration, immigration law enforcement, and the promotion of ‘anti-
illegal’ rhetoric” (Golash-Boza, 2009b, 296; cf. Fernandes 2007). While the immigration
industrial complex refers specifically to the particular union of factors that has occurred
in the last thirty years, it is the culmination of the process of immigrant marginalization
and control that this chapter traces throughout U.S. history. Finally, the genealogy below
shows that detention has come to be more than simply the incarceration of a migrant prior
to deportation. In the chapter’s conclusion, I argue policymakers’ modern-day
assumptions that detention and deportation work to deter future migration reveals a
conceptualization of these practices as transnational, extra-border control mechanisms.

Antecedents

National security concerns and racist sentiments were consistently at the heart of
the exclusionary efforts serving as antecedents for the detention and deportation system
of today. Striking early examples that contributed to the evolution of the system’s
conceptual framework include episodes now considered black marks in history, such as
Indian Removal, Fugitive Slave Laws, and deportation schemes for African Americans
(Kanstroom 2007a). The direct legal foundations of today’s deportation regime are found
in the federal laws and court decisions establishing Chinese Exclusion. In the late 1800s
the U.S. economy dipped into a series of depressions, and the public view of Chinese
immigrants grew increasingly hostile (Kanstroom 2007a; Coleman forthcoming). A
variety of state government, local government, and informal vigilante-driven efforts aimed to deport foreigners, and the Immigration Act of 1891 enacted the country’s first federal deportation system (Chacón 2007). In addition, federal-level multi-year bans on new Chinese immigration were put into place, as were laws designed to target already-present Chinese for deportation (Nevins 2002; Kanstroom 2007a; Lee 2007; Coleman forthcoming).

Court cases that attempted (and failed) to challenge various aspects of Chinese exclusion set important precedents regarding the exceptionalism of detention and deportation law, as well as immigration law’s grounding in national security concerns (Coleman forthcoming). In the 1893 legal decision *Fong Yue Ting v. United States*, deportation was ruled to be an *administrative* and not a criminal procedure to expel undesirable residents from the United States. This essentially stripped those accused of immigration violations of procedural protections embedded in the criminal justice system. Cases at this time also established the plenary power doctrine, which gives Congress power to regulate immigration unconstrained by the Constitution (Coleman 2007a, 2009; forthcoming; Kanstroom 2007a). Central to the idea of plenary power was the determination that “the ability to police aliens was a national security issue and hence a power of war unreviewable by the courts,” even if no war was actually taking place at the time (Coleman forthcoming, 15). National security was hence established as a guiding rationale of immigration law, which became legally insulated from many forms of review and regulation.
Anti-Mexican sentiment and hysteria regarding the threat Mexicans posed to national security spurred the early twentieth century expansion of the nascent deportation system. Given that the existing U.S.-Mexico boundary cuts through what was until 1848 Mexican territory, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans had long passed back and forth between Mexico and the United States, and the boundary was largely unregulated and even unmarked (Nevins 2002). As a consequence of Chinese exclusion, however, more employers began to turn to Mexican workers, and the federal government instituted programs recruiting Mexican laborers to meet WWI-driven agricultural labor needs (Kanstroom 2007a). The subsequent growth in Mexican workers’ presence inspired racist resentment and violence (Nevins 2002; Kanstroom 2007a). As a result, the first policies targeting Latino (specifically Mexican) entry into the United States were enacted with the 1917 Immigration Act, which instituted formal immigration procedures, a literacy test, entry taxes at the border, and the regulation of the U.S.-Mexico border (Nevins 2002).

With these racist, nativist foundations in place, the embryonic deportation system continued to expand and bureaucratize (Kanstroom 2007a, 158). Deportation was increasingly embraced as a solution for a range of problems. Racist discourse was often merged with alarmist security fears to mask the use of deportation to keep labor in check and silence activists holding views perceived to be ideologically opposed to the U.S. government. The Bisbee, Arizona deportations in 1917 offer a prime example of labor deportation. Aiming to break unions, remove labor leaders, and frighten workers into compliance, employers and government collaborated in the deportation of immigrant

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7 Between 1921 and 1930, over 92,000 people were deported (Kanstroom 2007a).
workers of eastern and southern European origin who protested poor wages and working conditions (Kanstroom 2007a; Benton-Cohen 2011). The Bisbee deportations were followed by the federal government’s use of deportation as part of the post-World War I Red Scare, which occurred in a climate of heightened racial violence (Kanstroom 2007a). The so-called Palmer Raids of 1919 and 1920 targeted labor activists and anarchist leaders of, again, primarily eastern and southern European descent (Kanstroom 2007a), under the discursive guise of protecting national and local security.  

The so-called Palmer Raids of 1919 and 1920 targeted labor activists and anarchist leaders of, again, primarily eastern and southern European descent (Kanstroom 2007a), under the discursive guise of protecting national and local security. 

The blatant criminalization of racialized immigrants became routine as tough-talking politicians and a nervous American public blamed rising crime on immigrants. The 1917 Immigration Act codified growing public and political opinion that deportation was a suitable punishment for a new range of crimes (Kanstroom 2007a). The Immigration Act of 1924, also called the National Origins Act, created a permanent quota system governing immigration that blatantly favored northern Europeans over all other racialized groups, and defined “white” immigrants as the only legitimate immigrants (Chacón 2007; Nevins 2002). Interestingly, the 1924 Act exempted the Western Hemisphere from this quota system. Mexicans were therefore not included, and “[t]he exclusion and deportation systems thus evolved to become the primary legal means to regulate this movement of people” (Kanstroom 2007a, 157). The Border Patrol was created at that time to monitor the United States’ borders with Canada and Mexico (Nevins 2002; Hernández 2010). Marking the growing importance given to regulating

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8 Many of these deportations entailed the denaturalization of U.S. citizens (Kanstroom 2007a). Such a precedent is particularly interesting in the context of current political moves to eliminate birthright citizenship for so-called “anchor babies.”
cross-border movement, in 1933 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was made an agency within the Department of Commerce and Labor. It was moved to the Department of Justice in 1940 (Kanstroom 2007a).

Economic hardship led to intensification of deportation efforts targeting Mexican immigrants. In 1929, unauthorized entry was made a misdemeanor and re-entry after deportation a felony (Ngai 2005; Chacón 2007). Against the backdrop of the Great Depression in the 1930s, a campaign of forced “repatriation” resulted in the deportation to Mexico of roughly 500,000 Mexican immigrants and U.S.-born Mexicans, including many U.S. citizens (Nevins 2002; De Genova 2004; Kanstroom 2007a; Hernández 2008). Agricultural labor shortages occasioned by World War II, however, led to the initiation of the Bracero Program in 1942, a program which remained in place until 1964 and through which over four million labor contracts to work in the United States were signed by Mexicans. While intended to limit Mexicans’ stay to only as long as their labor was needed, the social networks established during the Program served to maintain immigration patterns even after the program’s termination (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Nevins 2002). Employers’ dependence on Mexicans as a cheap, flexible labor source endured far beyond the termination of the Program in 1964 (Calavita 1992). Also, while the idea behind the Bracero Program was to facilitate authorized entry into the United States, it appears to have actually increased unauthorized entry as many growers preferred to hire extra-legal immigrants because of the lesser expense and hassle with paperwork (Nevins 2002; De Genova 2004). As Mexican migration continued to increase

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9 Approximately the same number of Mexicans ‘voluntarily’ left as the result of scare campaigns by nativist groups.
as a result of these factors, anti-immigrant sentiment again grew. The deportation system became the primary way to regulate fluctuating labor needs and appease the American public (Kanstroom 2007a; Hernández 2008). Kanstroom (2007a, 224) writes, “The remarkably symmetrical relationship between labor recruitment and the deportation system is illustrated by the fact that, up to 1964, the number of braceros, nearly 5 million, was almost exactly the same as the number of deportees” (see also Nevins 2002).

Concern for national security was again stated as the rationale for deportation in the Cold War, anti-communist context of the 1940s to 1960s. Legislation established the basic framework of the existing immigration system, and deportation was once more used to target labor leaders, political activists, and liberal writers and artists (Kanstroom 2007a; Ridgley 2011). The Internal Security Act of 1950 broadened the grounds for deportation to include any present or past membership in the Communist Party. In subsequent court cases Congress’s plenary power was again affirmed and broadened. Judicial discretion was also curbed, and the government was given “virtually unlimited power to deport whomever it wanted” (Kanstroom 2007a, 205). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act, eliminated explicit racial criteria for immigration but set up a restrictive quota system according to nationality (TRAC 2006a). The Act also put into place harsh new standards for deportation: “It eliminated statutes of limitation for many types of deportation, reinforced retroactive ideological deportation, limited judicial review, and raised the standard for suspension of deportation” (Kanstroom 2007b, 1917). INS initiatives targeting immigrants for deportation during this era, such as Operation Wetback launched in 1954,
were propelled by both anti-communist security concerns and labor regulation aims (Garcia 1980; Calavita 1992).

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, put an end to the national-origins quota system, and it is generally hailed as a liberal reform for introducing a supposedly egalitarian system and emphasizing family reunification (Miller 2003a). The 1965 reforms, however, cumulatively had a restrictive effect particularly on Latino migration through the setting of a limit of 120,000 immigrant visas per year for the Western Hemisphere. This highly unrealistic number is a principal reason for the massive undocumented immigrant population of today (De Genova 2004; Kanstroom 2007a; Golash-Boza 2009b).

While the antecedents of modern-day deportation can be deduced through legislation, court cases, and particular events, immigrant detention is more difficult to trace. Throughout this historical period, immigrants were detained pursuant to deportation (Hernández 2008), likely held in criminal prisons and local jails. By the 1940s, the INS had at least half a dozen permanent detention facilities around the country (Ridgley 2011). During this period migrant detention was not necessarily a precursor to deportation. For example, Ellis Island, the first permanent immigrant detention facility, was established in the 1890s to detain arriving immigrants (Detention Watch Network 2010b). In addition, beginning in 1917 and carrying into the bracero era, arriving Mexican immigrants were routinely subjected to detention upon crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, and forced to undergo degrading medical examinations and quarantine before being allowed entry (Hernández 2008).
A pivotal precursor to contemporary detention practices was the INS’s World War II internment of over 33,000 “enemy aliens” (Ridgley 2011; Kanstroom 2007a). These detainees were “mostly people of Japanese, Italian and German backgrounds who were considered a threat to national security” (Ridgley 2011, 5). Roots of contemporary detention practices can be traced to these 1940s internments, through large-scale detention projects; the designation of particular facilities solely for immigrants; and cooperation between the INS, the Bureau of Prisons, and the Border Patrol (Kanstroom 2007a; Ridgley 2011). Ridgley (2011) notes that these detention projects significantly altered how INS personnel envisioned their work. Japanese internment also illustrated social and judicial “acceptance of racial stereotyping and detention of noncitizens” (Kanstroom 2007a, 213). After the end of war-time internment, most of these large internment facilities were closed, though the INS continued to operate some facilities, especially near the U.S.-Mexico border, for migrants awaiting deportation (Ridgley 2011).

In 1954, the INS announced it was eliminating detention except for immigrants facing deportation who were considered flight risks or a danger to public safety (Dow 2004). For the next nearly three decades, most arriving immigrants were simply excluded at the border or immediately deported, and immigrants facing deportation charges in the U.S. interior had numerous options available to help secure their release from detention (Miller 2003b; Dow 2004). Government initiatives targeting Mexicans for deportation, however, such as Operation Wetback in 1954, still involved large-scale detention efforts, including the opening of new INS facilities with the express purpose of holding migrants
prior to deportation (Hernández 2008). Wetback, an operation that “led to the highest number of persons ever held in detention by the INS in a single year, at over one-half million” (Hernández 2008, 51) was ironically initiated the same year in which the INS pronounced it was basically ending detention. Court decisions in the 1940s and 1950s further reinforced the government’s power to detain immigrants throughout deportation proceedings, no matter how long they lasted (Kanstroom 2007a).

Clearly, the foundations of the modern-day detention and deportation system were well-laid before its emergence in the 1980s and 1990s. Its early pillars include frequent recourse to national security concerns to justify deportation, persistent racialization and criminalization of immigrants, the use of deportation as a strategy for controlling labor and silencing critics, the development of systems for large-scale detention, and the firm establishment of the exceptionalism of immigration law.

**Evolution of the Present-Day System**

These pillars – particularly security fears, the linking of racialized immigrants to crime, and objectives for social control – continued to provide both purpose and rationale to the detention and deportation system as it acquired its contemporary form in the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, during these two decades of expansion, we see a growing belief and investment in the social control value of detention and deportation in relation to both immigrant and non-immigrant populations. Importantly, expanding detention capacity was linked to a shift in the perception of detention as more than simply a *de facto* aspect of deportation. It came to be seen as a strategic spectacle of enforcement, useful for
reassuring the anxious public that ‘something’ was being done to address their racialized security concerns. In addition, policymakers came to view both detention and deportation as playing critical roles in deterring future migration. In these perceived functions, the practices were performances enacted to exert control over multiple populations simultaneously. Significant in this time period, too, is the early establishment of the immigration industrial complex, as growing numbers of corporations, groups, and individuals came to perceive immigration enforcement practices, especially detention and deportation, as providing opportunities for personal and private gain.

Setting the Stage: Social and Political Climate

In the 1980s, numerous factors occurring in tandem led to a new period of restrictive and punitive immigration policy, including the foregrounding of detention and deportation (Kahn 1996; Miller 2003b; Dow 2004). Miller (2003a, 625) points to “post-industrial economic decline, skyrocketing unemployment, the ascendancy of right-wing political conservatism, negative public attitudes toward the dramatic increase of legal immigration made possible by legislative changes in 1965 and 1980, and trepidation about rising illegal immigration.” The resulting legislative changes to immigration law, as well as the increasing criminalization of immigration, were further influenced by the “tough on crime” attitudes and political initiatives occurring at this time, such as welfare reform and increasing incarceration rates (despite decreasing crime) (Welch 2002; Miller 2003a; Dow 2004).
The numbers of Latinos migrating to the United States, primarily from the Caribbean, Central America, and Mexico, surged in the 1980s. In 1980, in an effort to discount U.S. claims regarding the desperation of Cuban citizens under Communism, Cuban leader Fidel Castro declared that anyone who wanted to leave could do so from Mariel Harbor. Over 125,000 Cubans entered into the southern United States before an agreement was negotiated stopping the movement (Miller 2003a). Dire conditions in Haiti also drove 25,000 Haitians to undertake risky ocean crossings to reach the United States. In addition, approximately one million refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua made their way to the United States, most as a direct consequence of the Reagan administration’s foreign policy in Central America (Kahn 1996; Dow 2004). Mexican immigration, too, jumped in this decade after the 1983 collapse of the Mexican economy and the financial hardship created at the local level due to the loosening of trade regulations with its northern neighbor (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Miller 2003a; Bacon 2004; Fernandes 2007).

Rates of Latino migration did not decline in the 1990s, and among the U.S. public, these growing numbers of Latino immigrants, sensationalized in the media, “fueled a racial panic about refugee streams which were feared to be black and Latino, criminal, ideologically left, and diseased” (Hernández 2008, 51), reaching a state of public outcry by the end of the decade (Kahn 1996). The 1993 arrival of 286 smuggled

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10 In fact, Mexican migration again jumped after the 1994 passage of NAFTA as many small-scale Mexican farmers were forced out of farming because of unregulated imports of cheap grain from the United States. Also, a lack of labor protections led to a decline in Mexican wages and decreased employment stability, particularly pertaining to Mexicans’ employment by U.S.-owned companies (Bacon 2004; Fernandes 2007).
Chinese migrants on the *Golden Venture* brought undocumented migration to the fore of public discussion (Dow 2004). The first attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993 and then the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 – though perpetrated by a white American citizen – added to anti-immigrant hysteria (Dow 2004). Escalating criticism of immigration officials’ inability to keep illegal drugs from entering the United States, along with the discursive linking of Reagan’s War on Drugs to immigrants, further contributed to public suspicion and political targeting of Latinos (Miller 2003a; Dow 2004).

As immigrants were depicted as threatening to U.S. domestic security, a harsher tone and tactic was progressively adopted in immigration policy (Welch 2002). For example, in 1994, the INS commenced Operation Gatekeeper, which focused on policing and “protecting” the physical border, capitalizing on and deepening the conceptual division between Americans and Mexicans (Nevins 2002). There was also a new *interior* focus on immigrants, particularly on “criminal aliens” (Hernández 2008). California’s Proposition 187, passed in 1994, attempted to deny public services and benefits to undocumented immigrants, and punish citizens who did not report undocumented immigrants (Ono and Sloop 2002). Though 187 was eventually overturned in court, its approach had proven itself politically popular. Consequently the anti-immigrant narratives and tactics behind 187 were adopted in various locations around the United States and at the federal level.

1980s: Framework of the Contemporary Detention and Deportation System
It was in this context of racialized fears regarding immigration and security that the contemporary detention and deportation system steadily took shape in the 1980s, particularly a massive expansion in detention capacity. The pivotal turn toward these practices occurred in 1981, under the new Reagan administration. Faced with (and fueling) mounting anti-immigrant hysteria, the federal government declared that any immigrants seeking asylum would be detained while their decisions were pending. The administration and INS officials repeatedly justified the new emphasis on detention by stating that it would deter additional migration (Welch 2002; Dow 2004). Existing immigrant detention facilities were immediately filled beyond capacity with Cubans, Haitians, and Central American refugees, though Nicaraguans were usually excused as part of Reagan’s Nicaragua policy (Kahn 1996; Hernández 2008). The five immigrant prisons on the U.S.-Mexico border, where Central Americans typically crossed into the United States, became severely overcrowded, and conditions were deplorable (Kahn 1996; Dow 2004; Hernández 2008). The INS expanded detention capacity by contracting with a private contractor, the Corrections Corporation of America, to open facilities in Houston and Laredo, reopened a prison in Florence, Arizona, and built an immigration prison in Oakdale, Louisiana, with a capacity of 6,000 (Kahn 1996). In turn, the detention of racialized refugees reinforced the belief that immigrants were unsafe and criminal.

11 Reagan supported the right-wing military governments of El Salvador and Guatemala despite their widespread human rights abuses, including the use of paramilitary “death squads.” As part of his support of these governments, Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees were almost summarily denied asylum in the United States and subjected to detention and deportation (Kahn 1996). In contrast, Reagan did not support the left-leaning Sandinista government of Nicaragua, instead supporting the anti-Sandinista guerrilla movement called the Contras. As a way to discredit the Sandinista government, Nicaraguan refugees were typically exempted from mandatory detention and granted asylum.

12 Interestingly, this facility had also housed interned Japanese Americans during the Second World War.
These negative perceptions of immigrants dovetailed with belief in the social control functions of enforcement policies, that “Arrest, detention and removal would create a deterrent to future illegal migration” (Bach 2005, 8), in ways that led to new legislation expanding the grounds for detention and deportation. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), passed in an effort to decrease the undocumented immigrant population, was the first legislation to condone the use of criminal penalties for immigration violations (Miller 2003a). In so doing, it contributed significantly to the continued growth in detention (Welch 2002). Then, in 1989, the Justice Department under the new Bush Administration made detention mandatory for any immigrant whose refugee claim was denied, with the aim of discouraging possible claimants from migrating in the first place (Kahn 1996). This move led to the initiation of “the biggest detention project since it had imprisoned Japanese Americans during World War II” (Kahn 1996, 13).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, rates of criminal incarceration in the United States grew rapidly, largely spurred by the growing influence of private prison corporations and businesses that supply prisons in various ways, or what has been called the “prison industrial complex” (Davis 2003). The increasing emphasis on detention in immigration policymaking occurred in tandem with this expanding prison system, as growing numbers of local jails and private corporations (such as the Corrections

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13 For example, by setting up huge tents on prison grounds, the Port Isabel immigrant detention center’s capacity instantly increased from 425 to 10,000 (Kahn 1996).

14 This term builds on the “military industrial complex,” coined in 1961 by President Eisenhower to warn of the danger of growing relationships between the military, businesses, and legislators.
Corporation of America, Wackenhut, and Geo Group) also embraced detention as a source of revenue (Welch 2002). As the mayor of Oakdale, Louisiana, explained during his successful 1986 push to have a facility built there, “Immigration prisons...are ‘a recession-proof industry,’ because if the U.S. economy suffers, the world economy will follow, which will lead to more undocumented aliens coming to the United States, and thus more employment for Oakdale” (paraphrased in Kahn 1996, 151-152). Indeed, the building of both criminal and detention facilities was often undertaken as a strategy to help counties and localities out of tough financial times (Welch 2002). As the country moved into the 1990s, the development of the “immigration industrial complex” could be considered to parallel that of the private prison industry (Welch 2002; Golash-Boza 2009b).

1990s: Walls and Roof to the System

National security and public safety were again at the discursive fore of the profound changes in immigration law in the 1990s (Miller 2003a; Coleman forthcoming), changes through which “deportation became ever harsher, less forgiving, more widespread, and more insulated from judicial review” (Kanstroom 2007b, 1912). The creation and expansion of the category “aggravated felony” was exemplary of this trend. First crafted in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, it refers to types of crimes which automatically make immigrants subject to deportation proceedings and make detention mandatory. Initially the only crimes that qualified as aggravated felonies included those to do with drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, and murder (Miller 2003a, 2003b;
Kanstroom 2007a). In the Immigration Act of 1990, however, aggravated felony was broadened to contain any violent crimes entailing prison sentences of five or more years (Miller 2003b; Kanstroom 2007a). The category was once again expanded in 1994 to incorporate crimes of fraud and money-laundering, and judicial discretion was dramatically reduced (Miller 2003b; Kanstroom 2007a). Because deportation of an aggravated felon is regarded as an administrative action, these immigrants do not have the right to present their case before an Immigration Judge (TRAC 2006a).

In 1996, in the midst of growing anti-immigrant public furor and in the wake of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, two sweeping pieces of legislation were passed that would complete the framework of the pre-9/11 detention and deportation system: the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA). Despite the fact that the Oklahoma incident was perpetrated by a white U.S. citizen, in promoting the acts legislators discursively conflated immigration and terrorism, and invoked rhetoric calling for the protection of national security (Miller 2003a).

These laws exacted criminal punishments for immigration violations that until then had been considered civil violations, and greatly eroded the previously insulated status of lawful permanent residents to detention and deportation (Miller 2003b). IIRIRA again expanded categories of crimes included in “aggravated felony” to include crimes with possible sentences of one year – even if the sentence was not served – such as shoplifting, gambling, perjury, forgery (including of identification documents), and re-entry after deportation (Miller 2003a, 2003b; Kanstroom 2007a). IIRIRA also made the
newly broadened scope of aggravated felony limitlessly retroactive, meaning that immigrants were suddenly vulnerable for deportation due to convictions years earlier, even for crimes that at the time they were committed were not considered aggravated felonies (Miller 2003b; Kanstroom 2007a). Furthermore, this legislation eliminated virtually all possibilities for judicial discretion regarding relief from deportation, and permitted the use of secret evidence in court decisions (Welch 2002; Miller 2003a; Kanstroom 2007a; Hernández 2008).

Additionally, IIRIRA established the “expedited removal” procedure, originally applied only in certain areas along the U.S.-Mexico border, through which immigrants meeting certain conditions can be ordered deported by an immigration official in lieu of a judge, and are subject to mandatory detention (Siskin and Wasem 2005). The rights denied those subject to expedited removal include the right to be informed of the evidence against them and the right to communicate with family or legal counsel, and they are permanently barred from (legally) re-entering the United States (Siskin and Wasem 2005; Kanstroom 2007a).

AEDPA and IIRIRA vastly expanded the categories of immigrants subject to mandatory detention, particularly through the increased application of aggravated felony and expedited removal. Provisions were eliminated that had allowed for relief from detention, based on consideration of “family ties, dependent children, or the extensiveness of the alien’s ties to his community” (Miller 2003a, 636) for immigrants subject to deportation (Miller 2003a). In addition, new categories of immigrants, previously exempted in the past, were subject to mandatory detention, including children,
families, women, and lawful permanent residents (Miller 2003a). The deterrence paradigm played a significant role in the expansion of mandatory detention. Lawmakers, for example, framed detention of asylum-seekers as necessary for deterring fraudulent asylum claims (Haddal and Siskin 2010).

Together, AEDPA and IIRIRA were largely responsible for tripling the numbers of immigrants detained in the 1990s (Miller 2003b; Hernández 2008). The increased volume of detainees translated to longer detention durations. In 1981 the average INS detention duration was under four days; immediately after passage of the 1996 laws it jumped to over fifty days, though this number dropped to thirty-four days after the implementation of expedited removal (Miller 2003a). There were no regulations governing conditions in the rapidly growing number of facilities (INS-run, privately contracted, and county and local jails) detaining immigrants. Many detainees suffered a range of problems, such as physical, sexual, and mental abuse; inadequate food and medical treatment; unhygienic conditions; and isolation from families and legal assistance (Welch 2002; Dow 2004).

Furthermore, both IIRIRA and AEDPA continued the trend of criminalizing immigrants by changing the definition of deportable crimes. For example, many acts categorized as misdemeanors in the criminal justice system became “aggravated felonies” if committed by immigrants, a classification which triggers mandatory detention and deportation. As Miller (2003b, 221) explains, “These acts broadened the net in which aliens are confined by expanding (some would say exaggerating) categories of criminal offenses, criminal conduct, and notions of what constitutes a threat to society.” This
punitive approach to immigration worked recursively to reinforce racialized public perceptions of immigrants as criminal and dangerous, as increasing incarceration was taken as evidence of immigrant wrongdoing (Welch 2002; Hernández 2008; Martin manuscript). Welch (2002, 89) writes, “Detaining asylum seekers and refugees also contributes to criminalization whereby they are stereotyped as being threats to public safety and national security.” These processes of criminalization went hand in hand with the inclusion of new categories of immigrants in the detention and deportation system, a trend which was wholly embraced after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

**After September 11, 2001**

By the turn of the century, there were murmurs of a possible softening regarding detention and deportation among policymakers. However, the attacks of September 11, 2001 instantly derailed nascent reform attempts (Miller 2003a). Instead, “[m]uch like other national crises in U.S. history, fighting a war against terrorism came to mean fighting immigrants” (Hernández 2008, 39). Indeed, in the post-9/11 milieu, the new master narrative of homeland security not only continued to portray immigrants as a threat to national security, but also conflated immigrants with terrorists. The criminalization of immigration through law launched by IIRIRA and AEDPA in 1996 escalated, and Coleman (2007b, 60) argues, “9/11 has brought about a near conclusive blurring of what by the late 1990s amounted to an already well-faded distinction between the legal offenses of undocumented laboring, criminal activity by aliens and terrorism.” In addition, against the backdrop of post-9/11 anti-immigrant hysteria, the need to
disguise the racialized assumptions regarding the criminality of immigrants dissipated (Chacón 2007). For example, in 2003, the Justice Department made racial profiling permissible (and encouraged) in cases involving “national security” concerns (Chacón 2007). The formation of a public imagination in which racialized immigrants are criminals and terrorists has profoundly impacted policy development, leading to the passage and implementation of “cruel and brutal immigration policies” (Fernandes 2007, 30; Golash-Boza 2009a, 2009b).

Detention and deportation were centered in successive “anti-terrorism” legislation, as immigration law was wielded as a primary tool in the “war on terror” (Miller 2003a, 2003b; Chacón 2007; Coleman 2007a; Martin forthcoming). The U.S.A. PATRIOT Act of 2001 gave the Attorney General new powers of indefinite detention, as well as allowing for an individual’s detention based on “reasonable suspicion” of connections with terrorism, without showing actual proof (Dow 2004; Fernandes 2007; Haddal and Siskin 2010). These new powers were used to detain thousands of Muslim immigrants and hold them for extended periods in abusive, isolated conditions, and they were also applied generally throughout the immigration enforcement system (Dow 2004; Nguyen 2005). The Homeland Security Act of 2002 created the Department of Homeland Security, into which the INS was moved from the Department of Justice and split up into different agencies. The new Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was made responsible for the enforcement of federal immigration laws. The Homeland Security Act gave ICE additional resources for generating potential detainees by vastly

15 The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), the immigration court, was left in the Department of Justice.
increasing the budget for immigration enforcement (Siskin et al. 2006). The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) of 2004 provided for 8,000 new detention “beds” each year between 2006 and 2010 (Hernández 2008; Haddal and Siskin 2010), largely to assist the ICE in its goal of removing all removable immigrants, as stated in the Strategic Plan 2003-2012: Endgame (Operation Endgame). As Hernández (2008, 46) points out, “This expansion, buoyed by the bureaucratic shift to a national security context, occurs even though the majority of detainees, Latino criminal alien detainees, have nothing to do with terrorism.” Also in 2004, the DHS announced expedited removal would be applied to migrants caught within one hundred miles of the U.S.-Mexico land border, driving its application deep inside U.S. territory (Coleman forthcoming).

IRTPA together with the REAL ID Act of 2005 again expanded provisions for deportation as well as definitions of terrorism in ways that netted additional categories of immigrants (Siskin et al. 2006). Also in 2005, DHS launched the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), which focuses on the southern border and involves numerous government agencies, the use of “Smart Border” technology, more personnel to enhance border surveillance and immigrant apprehension, and “Expanded detention and removal capabilities to eliminate ‘catch and release’ once and for all” (DHS 2005, opening statement; Siskin et al. 2006; Fernandes 2007; Núñez-Neto 2008). As Martin (forthcoming, 1) discusses, the increasing use of detention was central to these approaches, as “loopholes” which had previously prevented the detention of particular

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16 Despite this legislation, the Congressional Research Service reports that total detention capacity has increased by only around 12,000 (Haddal and Siskin 2010).
populations were closed: “Families, those seeking political asylum, and non-Mexican nationals to whom immigration courts had previously granted relief became subject to detention, as ‘undetainability’ came to be understood as a source of territorial vulnerability.” Furthermore, as part of SBI, in early 2006 the DHS made expedited removal applicable to any undocumented immigrants apprehended within 100 miles of all land borders and coastal areas, putting immigrants living in many major metropolitan areas at risk (DHS 2004; Siskin and Wasem 2005; Kanstroom 2007a; Coleman 2009; Coleman forthcoming). The DHS Secretary called for additional detention capacity to facilitate the use of expedited removal (U.S. CBP 2005).

The insulation of detention and deportation law from judicial oversight was also expanded in this context, as the Executive Branch of government under the Bush administration orchestrated numerous expansions of the power to detain immigrants (Miller 2003a). Additionally, court decisions continued to amplify the plenary power (power not constrained by the Constitution) of Congress to regulate immigration (Miller 2003a; Coleman 2007a; Kanstroom 2007a). As in previous eras, “the linkage of immigration with national security tends to support excessive judicial deference and jurisdictional-preclusion statutes that dangerously empower the executive branch” (Kanstroom 2007b, 1919) in ways that make detention and deportation “increasingly immune from meaningful oversight” (Kanstroom 2007a, 226). This exceptionalism is significant because it contributes to the high degree of impenetrability surrounding the detention and deportation system architecture.

17 The DHS eschews, for the most part, programs providing alternatives to detention proven to work (in other words, proven to prevent immigrants from “absconding”) (Fernandes 2007).
Another characteristic of the post-9/11 era is heightened interior enforcement together with increasing cooperation between federal immigration officials and state and local law enforcement officers, which make more immigrants vulnerable to detention and deportation. For example, such cooperation leads to considerable increases in the tagging of crimes considered minor in a local context as aggravated felonies, triggering mandatory detention and removal (Coleman 2007a, 2009; Núñez-Neto 2008). Immigration policing powers have been delegated to more and more local law enforcement agencies through the previously little-used 287(g) clause of the 1996 IIRIRA legislation (Coleman 2009). Immigration enforcement is also being expanded at the local level through the “inherent authority doctrine” declared by Attorney General John Ashcroft in 2002, which permits nonfederal law enforcement officers to enforce immigration law (Coleman 2007a, 2009).\(^\text{18}\) Inherent authority allows increased cooperation between local and federal authorities in immigration enforcement efforts, the linking of local and federal databases registering criminal and immigration violators, and the extension of the authority to initiate deportation proceedings to local law enforcement through the Secure Communities program (Coleman 2007a; 2009).\(^\text{19}\) In addition, there has been an increase in initiatives aimed at apprehending undocumented immigrants in the interior, such as Operation United Front in 2007, which supposedly targeted


\(^\text{19}\) Today, about 625 local, county, and state law enforcement agencies are working with the DHS in immigration enforcement efforts through various programs, and the Obama administration is pushing for the continued expansion of cooperation agreements nation-wide (Cervantes-Gautschi 2010).
employers but resulted in the detention of hundreds of migrant workers (Kanstroom 2007b).

Belief in the deterrent value of detention and deportation permeates these post-9/11 strategies. Policymakers, for example, have extolled the deterrent value of further expanding expedited removal. Similarly, mandatory detention of asylum seekers is framed as a way to discourage potential claimants from making the migration journey in the first place (Nuñez-Neto, Siskin, and Viña 2005). Operation Streamline, a program initiated by the Bush Administration in 2005 and implemented along the U.S.’s southern border (primarily in Arizona), aims to deter future undocumented immigration by criminally prosecuting apprehended migrants (Gambino 2010). An example of the emphasis on deterrence that is of particular salience for Ecuadorian migrants is a post-9/11 policy shift targeting Other Than Mexican immigrants (OTMs); in 2005, Ecuador ranked as number eight for origin countries of OTMs (Nuñez-Neto, Siskin, and Viña 2005). Between 2002 and 2005, as the numbers of OTMs apprehended tripled, they became a special concern for ICE and lawmakers in the context of fears regarding the potential of terrorists to enter the United States via the southern border. OTMs ordered removed could not simply be dropped across the southern border as Mexican migrants were. Instead, they had to be returned directly to their origin country or to a third country

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20 Migrants processed through Streamline are convicted of the crime of illegal entry and receive sentences of up to six months. For most, time is deemed served and they are deported shortly. If caught again, the sentence may be for up to two years (Gambino 2010). The program is implemented unevenly, depending more on where a migrant is caught than on what they have done; the majority of migrants caught on the border are still deported as part of a technically administrative process (Gambino 2010). Supporters of Streamline say that it has been very successful, and the two Arizona senators are pushing for massive expansion of the program, to criminally prosecute every migrant caught in the Border Patrol’s Tucson Sector (the busiest sector in the country). If this came to pass, an additional 51,000 detention beds would have to be added to the detention system (Gambino 2010).
willing to accept them. Due to insufficient detention capacity, however, OTMs were usually released and ordered to appear in court at a later date, but often failed to reappear (DHS 2004; Nuñez-Neto, Siskin, and Viña 2005; Coleman forthcoming). The importance of deterring OTM migration was stated as a principal reason for increasing detention capacity (Nuñez-Neto, Siskin, and Viña 2005).

The immigration industrial complex, which consists of entities that benefit from increasing immigration enforcement and anti-immigrant sentiment in numerous ways, has played a critical role in this post-9/11 milieu and the policies generated by it. Within this complex are politicians and media personalities who gain personal advantage by emphasizing and reinforcing immigrants’ illegality (Welch 2002; Fernandes 2007; Golash-Boza 2009b). Politicians often have been at the head of efforts blaming immigrants for a host of problems throughout history, as racialized groups, first the Chinese, then Latinos, and now Arabs, have been made into political scapegoats (Kahn 1996; Welch 2002; Fernandes 2007; Kanstroom 2007a; Golash-Boza 2009b). Scholars have also drawn attention to “media pundits who make their careers railing against ‘illegal aliens’” (Golash-Boza 2009a, 284), and who thus play a significant role in discursively linking immigration and crime, generating and sustaining public anti-immigrant sentiment, and garnering support for policies such as detention and deportation (Chacón 2007; Golash-Boza 2009a).

In this maelstrom of anti-immigrant sentiment and racialized fears, immigrants and refugees “become raw materials for the corrections business” (Welch 2002, 166). As Hernández (2008, 47) succinctly puts it, “detention has become a growth industry for
private corrections companies and a development strategy for local municipalities seeking to contract jail space with the federal government.” While the stock of private incarceration companies fell in the late 1990s due to speculative prison building, the post-9/11 anti-immigrant initiatives quickly reversed this trend as the federal government increasingly relied on private contracts to accommodate rapidly expanding detention needs (Dow 2004; Fernandes 2007; Golash-Boza 2009a; Barry 2010; Cervantes-Gautschi 2010). Indeed, immigrant detention can be a true profit machine (Welch 2002). The two largest immigrant detention companies in the United States, the Geo Group and the Corrections Corporation of America, earn annual profits of $1.17 billion and $1.69 billion, respectively (Cervantes-Gautschi 2010). Many counties have also come to see immigrant detention as a desirable source of profit, working with private companies in the construction of new facilities (Barry 2009a, 2010). In addition, there are a wide range of other kinds of companies involved, from phone companies earning profits on immigrants’ calls, to service companies providing food to physicians contracted to provide medical services (Fernandes 2007; Golash-Boza 2009a; Barry 2010). Furthermore, there are millions of individuals employed in the immigrant detention and deportation industry who have a personal stake in its perpetuation (Welch 2002).

Those who directly profit from the incarceration of immigrant bodies have critically driven continued detention growth. Indeed, private contractors, with the interests of their own companies at stake, were central to the planning and

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21 Immigration enforcement in general has become a prime source of profit for businesses claiming to act in the interest of national security (Fernandes 2007; Barry 2009b; Cervantes-Gautschi 2010). These companies offer new software, border patrol and monitoring technology, military equipment used on the border, entry-exit screening systems, and biometric identity systems (Fernandes 2007).
implementation of the federal government’s post-9/11 immigration enforcement policies, including policies requiring increased detention capacity (Welch 2002; Fernandes 2007). Fernandes (2007, 171) explains, “the roots of DHS … are not buried in the concerns of homeland security, but in the concerns of big business” (Fernandes 2007). Blatant examples exist of ways in which private companies influenced homeland security legislation and policy-making to serve their own interests, including exemptions from lawsuits and lucrative contracts (Fernandes 2007). There is also a significant number of individuals who move between working in the design and implementation of immigration enforcement policy and in private industry (Fernandes 2007; Barry 2009b). Specifically in the immigrant detention industry, examples abound of government officials, including congresspeople, involved with security policy-making who serve on corporate boards or are personally financially invested in companies profiting from immigrant detention (Fernandes 2007; Barry 2009b; Cervantes-Gautschi 2010; Hodai 2010).

Lobbying by private companies with a stake in detention has played an instrumental role in directing the development of the DHS and its policies (Fernandes 2007; Barry 2009b; Cervantes-Gautschi 2010; Sullivan 2010). Importantly, lobbying played a pivotal role in DHS’s 2006 policy shift to charge immigrants with crimes considered aggravated felonies, like identity theft and fraud for carrying falsified documents, a move which massively expanded the potential detention population. Private corporation influence also encouraged DHS’s undertaking of a series of high-profile

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22 Cervantes-Gautschi (2010) observed that, “From 2005 through 2009, for every dollar that GEO spent lobbying the government, the company received a $662 return in taxpayer-funded contracts, for a total of $996.7 million. CCA received a $34 return in taxpayer-funded contracts for every dollar spent on lobbying the federal government, for a total of $330.4 million.”
workplace and public space raids in the U.S. interior in 2006 and 2007 (Cervantes-Gautschi 2010).\(^{23}\) In addition, lobbying efforts contribute to the maintenance of weak regulatory frameworks (Flynn and Cannon 2009), allowing detention providers to increase profit by providing a minimum of basic services for detainees, the effects of which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six (Welch 2002; Dow 2004; Barry 2009a).

Such moves centering incarceration and expulsion in post-9/11 immigration enforcement policy were made possible by the anti-immigrant narrative and climate inculcated by opportunistic politicians and media personalities. Clearly, the immigration industrial complex, the combination of these individuals and groups who benefit directly or indirectly from punitive and restrictive practices, has become a keystone of the expanding detention and deportation system.

**Conclusion**

This genealogy illustrates that while 9/11 was an important episode in the development of the detention and deportation system, it propelled an intensification of processes already firmly under way. Indeed, the system has long been intimately linked to powerful narratives of security, processes of racialization and criminalization, and objectives for social control. Discourses of crisis and national danger regarding undocumented immigration have repeatedly spurred the increasing use of detention and

\(^{23}\) The 2006 surge in detention also corresponds with massive increases to the ICE budget for detention and deportation of more than 51 percent between 2006 and 2010 (Cervantes-Gautschi 2010). Budgets of the U.S. Marshalls and the Bureau of Prisons related to their role in immigration detention and transportation have also increased considerably. These budget increases are likewise directly reflected in the soaring profits of companies like Corrections Corporation of America and GEO Group (Cervantes-Gautschi 2010).
deportation, as well as justified a high degree of exceptionalism in law and practice. In the last thirty years, the interface of these factors with the powerful immigration industrial complex has propelled a massive expansion in the system. Today, the D & D system itself is an important factor in the now explicit linking of immigration, crime, and terrorism in the American imagination.

In both harnessing and buttressing the master narrative of homeland security, the contemporary system has profound social control functions. Coleman (2008, 2009) argues that for migrants, incarceration in and expulsion from their destination country act as forms of “post-entry regulation,” working to police their behaviors and insure a flexible, low-cost workforce. As Martin (forthcoming, 17) contends, “Hoping to ‘catch and remove’ existing undocumented migrants and to deter future migration, detention is as much a spectacle of state power, as it is an enforcement tactic.” Through this genealogy, I also show how these enforcement practices simultaneously discipline non-immigrant populations, by reinforcing racialized perceptions of immigrants as dangerous outsiders in ways that recursively feed the hegemonic discourse of homeland security. The immigration industrial complex, in turn, is able to produce migrant bodies themselves as vehicles for profit (in addition to the profit generated by the labor of these bodies).

Here, I build on Coleman’s argument to suggest that policymakers’ presumptions of deterrence also convey belief in the pre-entry regulation value of deportation and detention. That is, policymakers count on the threat of future incarceration and removal to work across borders to influence the decisions of potential migrants, essentially aiming
to prevent migration before it occurs.\textsuperscript{24} That policymakers are cognizant of the transnationality of migrant relationships is clear in particular courses of action taken regarding detention and deportation. For instance, a report detailing possible reasons for an increase in undocumented Other Than Mexican entry rates highlighted the spreading of knowledge about a detention “loophole” to migrant origin countries. It read, “Some have speculated that news of this shortfall in detention space in Texas, which leads most OTMs to be released on bond with a notice to appear before an immigration judge, has been circulating in Central and South America and has led OTM aliens to enter the country along the Texas border” (Nuñez-Neto, Siskin, and Viña 2005, 13). Policymakers’ belief that detention and deportation would work through transnational relationships to deter migration was then affirmed by the authorization of the massive expansion in detention capacity. As Martin’s (forthcoming, 26) work on the ICE’s efforts to detain families and other vulnerable populations illustrates, “detention figures a transnational field of potential, future migrants, subjects that calculate the risk of border crossing and seek to maximize their returns on migration.” In this view, detainees’ bodies are seen as fitting canvases on which to broadcast the DHS’s message of non-welcome, both within the United States and into countries of migrant origin.

My assertion regarding the extra-territorial social control function of detention and deportation may seem at odds with the desire to regulate immigrant labor inside U.S. borders; if these practices were successful and worked to deter migrants, then the steady supply of new migrant laborers would end. Due to the structural reasons behind

\textsuperscript{24} Collyer (forthcoming) also regards deportation as a biopolitical tool. His focus is on the disciplinary role of deportation in international population management, as a “technology of citizenship.”
migration, however, both of these social control functions can co-exist. That is, due to the continued demand in the United States for migrant labor and the variety of factors in migrant origin countries contributing to decisions to migrate, more restrictive policies are not likely to ultimately result in fewer immigrants in the labor force. This reality enables the simultaneous promotion of policies intended to discipline migrant labor in destination countries and those aiming to discipline potential migrant mobility in origin countries. Furthermore, as I argue later in this dissertation, policies like detention and deportation may actually contribute to additional migration and, therefore, effectively negate any deterrent effect these practices may have.

This account of the development of the detention and deportation system raises a number of questions that will be addressed in subsequent chapters. How do the exceptionalism of detention and deportation law, the construal of immigrants as a national security threat, the immigration industrial complex’s view of immigrants as “raw materials,” and the swift expansion of the system shape its interior structure and operation, as well as detained immigrants’ experiences? This question is addressed in Chapters Five and Six. Also, how do detention and deportation reverberate in Ecuador? What exactly is the impact of this message of non-welcome in Ecuador? These questions are the subject of Chapter Seven. First, however, Chapter Three focuses on Ecuador, which as mentioned above is number eight on the DHS’s list of origin countries of Other Than Mexicans (Nuñez-Neto, Siskin, and Viña 2005). We explore the history, trends, and contemporary realities of Ecuadorian migration to the United States, with a critical gaze
to ways in which U.S. policies have long interlocked with Ecuadorian domestic factors to influence migration decisions and patterns.
CHAPTER THREE

Beyond Borders:

The Geopolitics and Structures of Ecuadorian International Migration

Introduction

The vignette opening Chapter One detailed the moment of forced return from the United States for a plane of Ecuadorian deportees. On a bus ride carrying these migrants from the coastal city of Guayaquil to the southern Andean region where many had family, one man expressed to me, “What is there for me here? Nothing. I have to go back. I have to do it for my family.” His statement encapsulates the reality demonstrated by the abbreviated history of Ecuadorian international migration in this chapter. That is, international migration has become structurally embedded as an increasingly common household survival strategy in Ecuador, and the decision to migrate is often conceptualized as a matter of little choice. Importantly, this history reveals a long-standing, intimate relationship of interdependence between the United States and Ecuador. Today, migration patterns are entrenched to the degree that in the face of progressively more punitive and restrictive U.S. immigration enforcement strategies, Ecuadorians continue to emigrate.

Attention to this relationship highlights, too, the fact that U.S. policies have been critical drivers of Ecuadorian migration patterns throughout their development. The previous chapter illustrated how objectives for economic and social control over immigrants, buttressed by discourses of national security and processes of racialization
and criminalization, have consistently undergirded U.S. immigration policy. While control over migrant labor within U.S. territory has long been a primary policy function, the supposition that policy also works extra-territorially, to exact control over potential migrants in their countries of origin, has gained traction in the last three decades. This chapter’s account of Ecuadorian migration shows that while U.S. policies have indeed reverberated beyond the United States’ physical borders, the ways in which they have done so deviate significantly, and in numerous ways, from policymakers’ expectations. Indeed, the reach of U.S. policies to Ecuador significantly pre-dates the installation of deterrence-driven objectives. In addition, policies expressly deemed immigration policies are not the only ones that reverberate into countries of migrant origin. Post-colonial and neo-colonial policies enacted by the United States with the objectives of shaping global markets and preserving U.S. interests in the hemisphere have also influenced Latin American economic and political landscapes in pivotal ways. Scrutiny of the restrictive and punitive policies aimed at controlling migration in recent decades points to a host of consequences that appear antithetical to U.S. objectives. Primary among these is the growth of an increasingly sophisticated and extensive human smuggling network.

In its exploration of these histories and patterns, the chapter is organized as follows. I begin by exploring precursors to and the inception of Ecuadorian emigration to the United States. While Ecuadorians only began to migrate to the United States in the 1950s, the foundations for migration patterns were laid in the nineteenth century. Early migration out of Ecuador primarily occurred from the southern Andean provinces of Azuay and Cañar, which compose the region in which research was conducted for this
project. The subsequent development and entrenchment of migration patterns in subsequent decades was spurred by a particular interplay of domestic and international factors, notably influenced by U.S. geopolitical actions. In the late 1990s, acute domestic crises led to the expansion of patterns of international migration out of Ecuador, including the incorporation of Europe as a destination in addition to the United States. The continued dominance of the United States as a destination for migrants originating in Azuay and Cañar even in the face of hardening U.S. policy, however, is testimony to the structural embeddedness of early migration patterns. The chapter next explores ways in which U.S. immigration policies influence Ecuadorian migration. Here, I focus on the extra-territorial implementation of policies believed to deter migrants from ever gaining entry to the United States. While their deterrent effect is dubious, these policies have clearly contributed to the development of human smuggling in Ecuador. In fact, largely due to the collective effect of these policies, Ecuador has become a regional and increasingly international hub for human smuggling.

The Development of Ecuadorian International Migration Patterns

Ecuador’s southern Andean provinces of Azuay and Cañar form the epicenter of migration to the United States, historically and presently (See Appendix B for a map of Ecuador). The city of Cuenca, with a contemporary population of around 450,000, serves as regional capital for these provinces. As Whitten (2003, 10) states, “the greater Cuenca region is Ecuador’s emigration system writ large.” Migration out of these provinces began and expanded consequent to a complex intersection of domestic and international
political, economic, and social factors. The collapse of the export-oriented Panama hat industry in Azuay and Cañar was especially critical to the early establishment of migration networks between Ecuador and the United States in the 1950s. Since then, U.S. geopolitical and economic influence has continued to play a significant role in the development of mobility patterns.

The Commencement of Ecuadorian Emigration to the United States

The critical influence of foreign governments on the eventual development of Ecuadorian migration patterns can be traced back to Ecuador’s post-independence relationships. After the termination of colonial rule in the early 1800s, Latin American countries were urged by the United States and Europe to develop products for export (Hillman 2001). The subsequent transformations in the Ecuadorian economy had two important consequences. First, the Ecuadorian economy became highly dependent on and oriented to foreign markets. While agricultural products were the primary exports for many areas of the country, in the southern Andean provinces Panama hats were the principal items produced to sell abroad. Second, this development of export-based industries encouraged previously unknown domestic mobility. For example, the successful development of cacao and sugar cane for export from the 1860s to 1950s sparked highlands to coast labor migration, as did the expansion of the banana export business in the 1940s to 1960s and shrimp farming in more recent decades (Jokisch 1997; Camacho 2004). The development of the petroleum industry provoked domestic migration to the eastern Amazon region beginning in the 1970s (Jokisch 1997; Camacho
Additionally, after World War II many Latin American economists warned that Latin American countries were becoming too dependent on foreign markets. In a strategy known as Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), they therefore advised Latin American governments to reduce reliance on primary product exports, and develop industries that produced goods for consumption within their own countries (Hillman 2001; Perreault and Martin 2005; Peet and Hartwick 2009). Ecuador was among the countries that at least partially followed these recommendations (Carrière 2001). Consequently, the growth of small city-based industries spurred considerable rural to urban migration (Jokisch 1997).

Mid-twentieth century land reform dovetailed with the development of export agriculture to play a role in increasing Ecuadorians’ domestic mobility. Semi-feudal labor arrangements, in which indigenous families were tied to agricultural lands owned by wealthy landowners, had endured long after independence from colonial rule in Ecuador (Jokisch 1997; Kyle and Liang 2001). Land reforms occurred in 1964 and 1973 in order to prevent Communist sentiment from gaining traction in the countryside, promote capitalist modernization of the country’s agriculture, and produce sufficient food to feed a growing urban population (Jokish 1997; Korovkin 1997). Though these reforms effectively dissolved the semi-feudal system, they “maintained an inegalitarian land tenure structure” in which the small parcels of land allotted to families were not sufficient to sustain a household (Jokisch 1997, 67; Kyle 2000). Consequently, men from all over

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25 It is worth noting that the U.S. government played a role in these reforms. In response to the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and fears of spreading communism, in the 1960s and 1970s the U.S. government, principally under President Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress, sponsored agrarian reforms throughout Latin America (Grindle 1985).
Ecuador, including Azuay and Cañar, began to engage in “circular migration,” working in seasonal export agriculture or new urban industries in order to supplement meager farming incomes. Women, too, began to migrate to urban areas in order to work in developing industries as a household survival strategy (Borrero and Vega 1995; Jokisch 1997; Gratton 2006).

The widespread engagement in domestic migration laid the conceptual foundation for the transition to international migration. Already uprooted from their communities and families, moving abroad seemed less of a radical move for these Ecuadorians than it otherwise would have (Kyle 2000). Ecuador’s general dependence on exports made its economy vulnerable to competition and worldwide market fluctuations, a vulnerability that was transferred to households (Kyle 2000). When the Great Depression in the United States and its reverberations worldwide caused an abrupt decline in exports, economic instability increased country-wide in Ecuador (Carriére 2001). Some Ecuadorians, especially in the southern highlands, considered emigration.

The first Ecuadorian migrants came to the United States in the 1950s from Azuay and Cañar, as an immediate response to the decline of a key export-driven industry: Panama hats. Local elites had developed the industry of straw hat weaving beginning in the mid-1800s (Kyle 2000; Jokisch 2001; Gratton 2006). These hats, known as Panama hats due to passage of the export through Panama, enjoyed great success on international markets, particularly in the United States (Kyle and Liang 2001). Many local households’ incomes came to be derived from some aspect of Panama hat production, in addition to small-scale farming and circular labor migration. With the worldwide economic recession
in the 1930s and 1940s, the hat industry was among those that experienced a sharp drop in exports. At the same time, the style fell out of use and cheaper hats from Asia became available. With the combination of these factors, the industry was unable to recover even after global markets improved (Kyle 2000).

The collapse of the hat industry rippled throughout Azuay and Cañar to generally destabilize the regional economy and disrupt household livelihoods. Consequently, in the 1950s, some hat exporters used their international market connections to migrate to the United States, primarily New York (Jokisch 2001). At that time, it was relatively easy to enter the United States. The U.S. post-war economy was booming, and the first Ecuadorian migrants, almost entirely men, quickly found work (Camacho 2004). These “pioneer migrants” established the roots for the subsequent development of migration networks (Kyle 2000). Experience with domestic circular labor migration enabled growing numbers of Ecuadorians to make the mental leap necessary to engage in international migration (Jokisch 2001). Over the next several decades, migration to the United States, primarily from Azuay and Cañar, increased steadily as migration became an increasingly popular strategy for dealing with continued economic hardship and weak government leadership.

*International Debt, Domestic Austerity, and the Acceleration of Migration*

At the nexus of various international and domestic factors, rates of Ecuadorian emigration to the United States grew gradually in the following decades, then accelerated more rapidly in the 1980s and early 1990s. These patterns must be understood, first, in
the global geoeconomic context. In the 1960s and 1970s, the world’s oil dependence grew and oil-producing countries deposited their soaring profits in banks of the Western world. Eager lenders looking to invest excess capital encouraged countries of the "developing" world, largely in Latin America, to borrow heavily to finance development projects, and low interest rates provided a powerful incentive to do so (George 1988; Harper and Cuzán 2001). The stage was set for the Latin American debt crisis, which occurred subsequent to worldwide oil shocks in the late 1970s, the corresponding jumps in interest rates, and the 1982 oil market crash (George 1988; Harper and Cuzán 2001).

These international influences critically shaped the political and economic landscape in Ecuador. Oil had been discovered in the Ecuadorian Amazon in 1968 and Ecuador began exporting oil in 1972 upon completion of an Amazon to coast pipeline. The oil embargo orchestrated by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1973 drove international prices upward, a market condition from which Ecuador benefitted in the short term. Under the illusion that oil revenues would continue to grow, the military government that took power in 1972 borrowed heavily from international lenders in order to greatly increase military spending, develop internal infrastructure, and implement a range of domestic subsidies (Carriére 2001). Carriére (2001, 139) argues:

Given the climate of forced optimism and general approval by institutions that had a reputation for financial prudence (the commercial banks, the IMF [International Monetary Fund], the World Bank, the IDB [International Development Bank], etc.), it is

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26 Ecuador was not one of the countries depositing oil profits in Western banks at that time. It was, however, among the countries that borrowed from these banks.
not a surprise that the Ecuadorian military governments of the
1970s should have accepted the poisoned apple and set the country
on a pathway to economic decline and political polarization.

By the return to democratic government in 1979, petroleum had already had a deeply
transformative effect on Ecuador. Oil revenues fed a national dependency on subsidies,
government social programs, and low taxes. When international oil markets crashed in
1982, Ecuador found itself among the many Latin American countries suddenly in
serious economic trouble (Sawyer 2004). Ecuadorian policymakers, however, were
unwilling to accept the realities of reduced government budgets: “Rather than risk too
much austerity, politicians turned to deficit spending and foreign loans, financial
approaches that fueled inflation” (Gerlach 2003, xvi). Consequently, Ecuador became
increasingly indebted to international lenders. Because of spiraling interest rates, the cost
of servicing Ecuador’s external debt consumed ever greater portions of export revenues.
A devastating earthquake in 1987 resulted in additional increases to Ecuador’s debts
(Carriére 2001; Gerlach 2003). As U.S.-led efforts morphed international organizations
such as the IMF and the World Bank into tools of neoliberal economic policies, countries
such as Ecuador implemented harsh structural adjustment programs in an effort to service
their debts. Successive Ecuadorian governments, generally following neoliberal doctrine,
progressively dismantled protections for domestic industry and privatized public sector
industries, thus increasing Ecuador’s dependence on and vulnerability to international
markets (Sawyer 2004).
The resulting cycle of imposed austerity measures, rising inflation, and growing poverty critically shaped everyday realities for Ecuadorians in ways that provided strong incentives to emigrate (Carriére 2001; Marconi 2001; Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004). Household incomes dropped while the cost of living increased, at the same time as many government subsidies and assistance programs were cut (Jokisch 2001). Additionally, those leaving from Azuay and Cañar were motivated by displays of material rewards by migrants before them, such as the construction of large houses, improved educational opportunities for children, and purchase of goods like electronics and clothes (Jokisch 2001; Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). Concurrently, in the United States neoliberal ideology promoted reduced regulation of trade and business in ways that encouraged employers to search for ever-cheaper labor (Peck 2004; Bauder 2006; Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2007; Peck and Tickell 2007). Demand for migrant labor remained strong, and Ecuadorians consistently and easily found employment upon arrival, typically in the construction and service industries (Jokisch 2001).

In this context of overlapping national and international factors, Ecuadorians – primarily from the southern Andean provinces – drew on and expanded the networks of mobility initiated at the collapse of the Panama hat industry, and domestic migration was increasingly replaced by international movement (Jokisch 1997; Camacho 2004). By 1990, approximately 34 percent of all households in south-central Ecuador reported that at least one family member was in the United States, and more women began to join men as migrants (Borrero and Vega 1995; Jokisch 1997; Jokisch 2001). Indeed, migration to

27 While the United States was overwhelmingly the destination of Ecuadorian emigrants during this phase, Ecuadorians also ventured to Australia, Canada, Israel, and Venezuela (Borrero and Vega 1995).
the United States was becoming routine for many Azuay and Cañar families (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002).

“La Crisis” and Sharp Escalation of Ecuadorian Emigration

In the late 1990s, Ecuador experienced what was known as “la crisis,” the crisis. At this time, emigration rates grew explosively. Azuay and Cañar were no longer the primary senders of migrants, and Europe (primarily Spain) came to rival the United States as a destination. The crisis occurred at the convergence of international influence and domestic turmoil. As Gerlach (2003, 244) argues, “What was clear was that for thirty years, outside forces played major roles in Ecuador’s evolution – from oil companies, missionaries, environmentalists, and human rights activists to U.S. ambassadors and international lending agencies.” Ecuador’s adherence to neoliberal economic policies was a direct outcome of international pressure (Carriére 2001; Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004). The U.S. government in particular had long been involved in Ecuadorian politics for reasons that include Ecuador’s proximity to Colombia (and the strategic importance of a stable state from which to fight guerrilla activity and the “war on drugs”), a desire to exercise control over its neighbors in the Western hemisphere, and the protection of U.S. economic interests. The United States was able to influence Ecuador and other Latin American governments through direct pressure as well as its position of power in international lending agencies (Gerlach 2003; Whitten 2003).

By the mid-1990s, financial and political circumstances in Ecuador were extremely precarious. The deficit, unemployment, and inflation rates were at record
highs, while oil prices reached record lows and debt servicing consumed 41 percent of
the government’s budget (Carriére 2001). In addition, Ecuador engaged in an expensive
to infrastructure (Camacho 2004; Jokisch and Kyle 2008). Furthermore, the government
was characterized by instability. Corruption was on the rise, and there were increasing
numbers of popular demonstrations (Carriére 2001; Gerlach 2003). The volatile President
Abdalá Bucaram was impeached after two years in office, and Fabián Alarcón served as
interim president until the election of Jamil Mahuad by a very slim margin in 1998. In
1999, President Mahuad initiated a new round of austerity measures in an attempt to
service Ecuador’s external debt. Bank accounts, frozen to try to halt spiraling inflation,
were suddenly worth a fraction of their previous value (Carriére 2001; Acosta, López,
and Villamar 2004). Then, in January 2000, Mahuad began a national process of
dolarización (dollarization), or currency conversion to the U.S. dollar, and inflation
immediately jumped as high as 300 percent (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004).
Dollarization provoked the most violent demonstrations yet, led by indigenous leaders,
and nation-wide popular protests forced Mahuad out of office on January 21, 2001
(Gerlach 2003). Federal government power was temporarily held by a group of army
colonels, but they were quickly pressured by the U.S. government to step down, and Vice
President Gustavo Noboa took power (Carriére 2001; Gerlach 2003).

The cumulative effect of this crisis was devastating for Ecuadorians of all classes.
Between 1995 and 2000, Ecuadorians experienced the most rapid and extreme
impoverishment in the history of Latin America, when the percent of the population
living in poverty grew from 34 to 71 percent (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004). Rising poverty accompanied a general deterioration in human security, experienced as the closure of businesses; employment loss; erosion of working conditions and worker rights; and decreased social investments in health, education, housing, and community development. In turn, Ecuadorians’ daily lives were marked by conditions such as declining nutrition and health, and increased violence, crime, and precariousness (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004).

This context of political volatility, economic despair, and increased personal and household instability instigated a new era of Ecuadorian emigration, in which the view of migration as a logical escape mechanism was no longer limited to the region around Cuenca but extended throughout Ecuador (Weismantel 2003; Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004). Between 1999 and 2006, at least 7 percent of the Ecuadorian population migrated abroad (FLACSO 2006), and migrants began to leave from all over the country (Kyle and Jokisch 2005; Jokisch and Kyle 2008).

For many of the Ecuadorians who migrated as part of this exodus, Europe, not the United States, became the new “promised land” (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002, 82). Spain has been the primary European destination, though Ecuadorians have also migrated in smaller numbers to Italy, France, and the Netherlands (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). The expansion of migration to Europe occurred against the backdrop of Europe’s aging population, general upward socioeconomic mobility, and changing roles of women – factors which have created a shortage of unskilled laborers particularly in Spain and Italy (Camacho 2004; Cornelius 2004; Calavita 2005; Herrera 2006). Distinct from
Ecuadorians migrating to the United States, those going to Europe are predominantly women, due principally to the demand for domestic and personal care services (Camacho 2004; Cornelius 2004; Herrera 2006). Also, while lower-skilled Ecuadorians from more rural areas led migration to the United States, the 1990s crisis spurred professionals to lead migration to Spain, followed by Ecuadorians from lower educational backgrounds (Marrero 2004).

For Ecuadorians departing from Azuay and Cañar provinces, the United States remained the most common destination. Not surprisingly, then, the majority of Ecuadorians in the United States are from Azuay and Cañar (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). Migrants from this region were able to draw on already-established migration and smuggling networks. Family reunification was often a complementary goal of these Ecuadorians’ transnational movement. Despite the United States’ increasingly restrictive and punitive migration policies discussed in Chapter Two (and below), therefore, mobility patterns already in place in Azuay and Cañar intensified consequent to la crisis. Today, approximately 8.5 percent of Cañar’s population and 5.7 percent of Azuay’s have left Ecuador, ranking them as first and third for the country in percentages of migrants.

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28 Ecuadorians migrating to Spain at the time of the national crisis were able to take advantage of a 1963 agreement between Spain and Ecuador which allowed them to travel to Spain as tourists without a visa (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; Cornelius 2004). Also, the Schengen Agreement, of which Spain and Italy are signatories, allowed Ecuadorians to enter Europe via another signatory country without a visa (Ecuadorians usually chose The Netherlands for its reputation of relaxed review of entrants), and then travel to their country of choice (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; FLACSO 2008). Growing anti-migrant sentiment in the European Union, however, has led to tightened entry requirements (Herrera 2008), as well as increasing migrant legal irregularity (Ciriano 2004; Cornelius 2004; Calavita 2005) and repatriation programs, including deportation initiatives (FLACSO 2008).
abroad (FLACSO 2008). More detailed geographic analysis at the *cantón* level (equivalent to the U.S. county) illustrates how migration patterns have been concentrated in particular areas. For example, the percentages of population abroad for the *cantones* of Biblián and El Tambo within the province of Cañar are 11.3 percent and 11 percent; the rates for the *cantones* of San Fernando and Gualaceo in Azuay are 11 percent and 8.7 percent (FLACSO 2008). Migration rates can be even higher in certain areas at the household level; for example in the *cantón* of Cañar in Cañar province, 41 percent of households have one or more members abroad (Escobar 2008). A comparison of remittances also reflects the importance of migration in Azuay and Cañar, which in 2009 were the third and fourth highest remittance-receiving provinces in the country (Banco Central del Ecuador 2009).

Approximately 70 percent of Ecuadorians in the United States live in the New York City area. Ecuadorians have also settled in the cities of Chicago, Columbus (Ohio), Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, and suburban areas around Boston, New York, and Philadelphia (Kyle and Jokisch 2005; FLACSO 2008; Jokisch and Kyle 2008). The numbers of Ecuadorian women and men in the United States are now roughly equal (FLACSO 2008). Ecuadorians have generally had considerable economic success in the United States, especially in comparison to other Latino immigrant groups, and they report high rates of employment (Gratton 2007). The wage differential between Ecuador and destination countries is profound; Kyle (2000) notes "an Ecuadorian in New York City … can earn the equivalent of the Ecuadorian monthly wage in one day, or even a few hours"

29 Number two is the province of Loja, with almost 6 percent of the population abroad (FLACSO 2008). The majority of Lojanos are in Europe (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002).
Drawing on the 2000 U.S. Census, Gratton (2007) reports that Ecuadorian men in the United States typically work in building trades, food service industries, and to a lesser degree managerial and professional employment. Ecuadorian women are employed in factory work, domestic work, white- and pink-collar jobs, managerial positions, and food service.

Today, estimates suggest that at least 10 percent of Ecuador’s total population of fourteen million lives abroad, or between 1,400,000 and 1,600,000, the majority of whom are undocumented (FLACSO 2008). Current scholarly calculations usually place the number of Ecuadorians in the United States around 500,000 to 600,000 (Gratton 2007; Jokisch and Kyle 2008). Though Ecuadorian migration to Spain began significantly later than migration to the United States, it occurred remarkably quickly. By 2005 there was approximately the same number of Ecuadorians in Spain as in the United States: 500,000 (Actis 2006). Italy has the third largest population of Ecuadorians outside of Ecuador, with estimates ranging from around 70,000 (FLACSO 2008) to 120,000 (Jokisch 2007). Anecdotal evidence gathered during fieldwork in 2008 and 2009 suggests that the worldwide economic recession has made employment abroad more difficult to secure, particularly for undocumented Ecuadorians. The simultaneous decrease in employment opportunities in Ecuador, however, still tends to make the United States or

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30 The 2000 U.S. Census reported that 257,760 Ecuadorians reside in the United States, but for a number of reasons – the foremost being the undocumented legal status of the majority of Ecuadorian U.S. residents – this is a gross undercount (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). Also, estimates by the Ecuadorian government and media articulate a significantly higher number, of at least one million (Marrero 2004; Jokisch 2007).

31 Ecuadorians now constitute the largest Latin American immigrant group in Spain (FLACSO 2008), and their numbers are near those of Moroccans, the largest immigrant group (Jokisch and Kyle 2008).
Europe (either remaining in the destination country or newly migrating there) more attractive in comparison.

This history of Ecuadorian migration shows that foreign influence, particularly of the United States, has critically stimulated and shaped mobility patterns. First, geopolitical influences guided the development of internationally-oriented industries that proved highly susceptible to fluctuating global markets and provoked the initiation of emigration abroad. Then, under U.S. guidance, Ecuador pursued neoliberal economic policies which, together with the missteps of successive Ecuadorian governments, eventually led to the profound crisis that sparked massive emigration.

**The Structural Embeddedness of International Migration in Ecuador**

International mobility has become profoundly, structurally entrenched in Ecuador. Though the sense of absolute crisis that permeated Ecuador in the late 1990s and early 2000s has dissipated, a considerable portion (10 percent) of the population remains abroad. What’s more, Ecuadorians continue to migrate. Consequently, migration shapes the contours of the daily lives even of Ecuadorians who have not migrated in myriad ways. Here, I examine this structural embeddedness in Ecuadorian economy, politics, and culture.

The Ecuadorian economy has been transformed by international migration. The country is now deeply financially dependent on money sent back from its population abroad. Migrant remittances are the country’s second source of national income, after oil (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2006). In 2009, $2.5 billion in remittances were received in
Ecuador (Banco Central del Ecuador 2009). Foreign-earned cash has become central to household livelihood strategies and many local economies (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004; Jokisch and Kyle 2006). These monies have inflated the costs of goods, services, and properties particularly in areas of high emigration (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004; Jokisch and Kyle 2006). Many businesses have developed to transfer remittances from migrant destinations to Ecuador, shuttle goods and letters back and forth, and facilitate phone and internet communication between migrants and their families (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). Ecuadorian economists argue that a cyclical dependence on remittances has been created, tied to continuous inflation in the Ecuadorian economy, in ways that engender additional emigration (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004, 2006).

Furthermore, to some degree remittances can be considered to take the place of government expenditures and social services, creating yet another layer of dependence on migration (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2004).

In addition, new patterns of migration into Ecuador have significantly altered the employment landscape in ways that both encourage additional Ecuadorian migration and discourage return migration. The turn of the century surge in Ecuadorian out-migration has been accompanied by surging rates of in-migration to Ecuador. While exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, estimates suggest that between 60,000 and 120,000 Peruvians, and between 200,000 and 400,000 Colombians have migrated to Ecuador in recent years (Jokisch 2007). While Ecuador’s adoption of the U.S. dollar in 2000 contributed to the Ecuadorian emigration explosion, Peruvians and Colombians quickly found the potential

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32 This amount represents a significant decline from the high in 2007, of just over $3 billion, reflecting the worldwide economic recession.
to earn dollars in nearby Ecuador attractive (Jokisch and Kyle 2006). In addition, escalating violence in Colombia, much of it linked to the U.S.-led “war on drugs” and Plan Colombia (Rojas 2004), has forced roughly 150,000 Colombians to flee, making Ecuador home to Latin America’s largest refugee population (UNHCR 2011). These new in-migrants have occupied vacancies left in the labor market by U.S.- and Europe-bound Ecuadorians. These migrants are generally willing to work for less than Ecuadorians, generating complaints that they bring down wages and sparking racist and nationalistic friction (Jokisch 2007). There are also indications that by lowering wages and increasing competition in the Ecuadorian labor market, which is currently acutely stressed by the worldwide economic recession, Peruvian and Colombian immigration may fuel additional out-migration of Ecuadorians (Bowditch 2009a).

The orientation of the contemporary political landscape toward migrants and issues of migration provides additional testimony to the entrenchment of international mobility in Ecuadorian life. Rafael Correa, the current president who was first elected in 2007, has cobbled together a broad base of support by portraying himself as a populist, leftist, and at times even socialist leader. Correa recognizes the political necessity for the maintenance of this broad yet restless base of paying attention to migrants and migration issues. He established the National Secretariat of the Migrant (SENAMI), which offers a variety of services for migrants and their families, including several pilot programs to assist returning Ecuadorians. Promoting “universal citizenship,” the idea that

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33 Dollarization has also attracted a small but notable number of Chinese migrants to Ecuador (Jokisch 2007; Jokisch and Kyle 2008).

34 Between the ousting of Jamil Mahuad in 2000 and the election of Rafael Correa in 2007, three different men succeeded to the presidency.
all persons have the right to free international mobility, SENAMI has also worked with other states to develop bilateral and multilateral agreements regarding migration. Correa is often outspoken in his objections to particular U.S. and EU policies regarding immigration and border enforcement. He has visited European cities with significant populations of Ecuadorian migrants, pledged to open additional consulates in destination countries, and broadened the power of Ecuadorians abroad to vote in national elections. Indeed, the support of emigrants and their families may prove pivotal in the president’s efforts to remain in power, as well as in the aspirations of politicians throughout Ecuador, at all levels of government. For example, the Casa del Migrante (where I volunteered) is run by Cuenca’s municipal government. The Casa survived an administrative shift from the party which initiated it to another party after an election in 2009, which attests to the political importance of attending to migrants and their families.

Ecuadorian cultural and social life has also been fundamentally changed by international migration. In many communities migration has become culturally entrenched as an expected undertaking for young adults. This is often especially true for the children of migrants who grow up planning to join their parents in the United States (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; Escobar 2008; Herrera 2008). The economic changes provoked by migration also contribute to shifting social norms regarding the standard of living, acquisition of material goods, and services (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; Acosta, López, and Villamar 2006; Escobar 2008). The migration of household members has

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35 Those who migrate tend to be young; 43 percent of migrants are between twenty-one and thirty years old, 23 percent are between thirty-one and forty years old, and 22.5 percent are between one and twenty years old (including 9 percent of total migrants who are younger than eighteen, either adolescents traveling by themselves or accompanying adults) (FLACSO 2008).
provoked significant shifts in gender roles, for both women and men (Pribilsky 2004; Camacho and Hernández 2005a). Family composition can shift as well, for example as grandparents or other relatives assume parental roles in the absence of migrant parents (Escobar 2008). Paradoxically, international migration has also increased precariousness and decreased living standards for some, particularly in the cases of spouses or children essentially abandoned by migrants, or families burdened by migrants’ smuggling debts (Camacho and Hernández 2005a). The centrality of migration to life in Azuay and Cañar is also evident in phenomena such as the existence of numerous migrant-assistance organizations in Cuenca, and a daily section titled “Migration” in the regional paper El Universo. Furthermore, as this dissertation explores, many migration journeys fail, through apprehension, deportation, and even death, in ways that reverberate throughout Ecuadorian daily life.

Identification of some of the ways in which international migration has come to permeate Ecuador economically, politically, and culturally points to the fact that both motivations for and consequences of human movement across borders are complicated and overlapping. How, then, do migration patterns respond to U.S. immigration policies aimed at reducing or stopping them altogether? The next section addresses this question by examining the evolution of Ecuadorian mobility alongside U.S. policymakers’ aims. We see that against the backdrop of migration’s structural embeddedness in Ecuador, U.S. policies often have consequences unanticipated by policymakers, and even contrary to policymakers’ stated objectives.
U.S. Immigration Policies and Ecuadorian Migration

This section focuses on specific ways in which U.S. enforcement policies work extra-territorially to critically shape Ecuadorians’ migration decisions and strategies. As explored in the previous chapter, in the last three decades, the objective of deterring migration has become increasingly central in immigration policymaking. Alongside fears regarding national security, these social control aims have propelled ever more restrictive and punitive domestic and transnational enforcement efforts. Extra-territorial immigration statecraft includes rigid control of visas for legal entry, pressure on transit country governments to follow similar immigration practices, and ICE activity in Ecuador itself. These policies can be considered successful – that is, to have achieved the aim of deterrence – to some degree, in that at the time of la crisis, most migrants from outside of Azuay and Cañar chose Europe as their destination due in part to the difficulty, danger, and cost of the journey to the United States (Jokisch 2001; Marrero 2004). As the frequent arrivals of planes of deportees from the United States show, however, many Ecuadorians continue to migrate northward instead of across the Atlantic. Due to the deep economic and conceptual links already in place, most migrants from Azuay and Cañar still select the United States as their destination. The determination of these migrants intersects with increasingly restrictive, deterrence-driven, and spatially expansive policies to yield a host of unforeseen outcomes. The most significant of these outcomes is the development of extensive human smuggling operations. Immigration policies also profoundly influence migrants’ actual journeys, including geographic routes, risk, and cost.
The (Im)possibility of Documented Migration to the United States

Approximately 70 percent of migration from southern Ecuador to the United States is undocumented (Falconí and Ordoñez 2005). While most Ecuadorians express a preference for documented over undocumented migration, it is extremely difficult to obtain a visa for legal entry to the United States for any reason. For work or tourist visa applications made in Ecuador, decisions must be determined in person at the U.S. embassy in Quito or the consulate in Guayaquil, and they therefore typically require costly trips from home. For residents of Azuay and Cañar, traveling to Guayaquil (by road) takes a minimum of four hours. Multiple, hefty, non-refundable application fees of hundreds of dollars (depending on type of application) are required. Even Ecuadorians with legitimate claims for obtaining a visa often become discouraged by the considerable investment of time and money required. Then, determinations are based on a large range of grounds for exclusion, as well as the subjective decisions of consular officials. The overwhelming majority of visa applications are denied. As a lawyer interviewed during fieldwork explained, U.S. immigration laws work to discourage people from migrating legally. For most Ecuadorians who decide to migrate to the United States, contracting with a smuggler is the easiest, fastest, and in some cases the least expensive option.

The difficulty of obtaining a visa for family reunification with a documented Ecuadorian in the United States also profoundly influences migration decisions.³⁶ Herrera

³⁶ Between 1961 and 1995 over 185,000 Ecuadorians received legal permanent resident status (16,292 by virtue of the 1986 legislation) (Jokisch 2007). These Ecuadorians and the limited others who have received legal residency or citizenship since then were (and still are) then able to extend residency to additional family members in Ecuador (Jokisch 2007; Ramírez and Álvarez 2009).
(2008, 82) states “Migration policies come to play a determining role in the migratory plans of Ecuadorian families.” Despite the stated centrality of family reunification to contemporary U.S. immigration policy, the system today is largely dysfunctional because the number of applications filed greatly exceeds the quota permitted by the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Citizens and permanent residents can wait ten years before their applications are processed (Herrera 2008). The impossibility of migrating legally spurs many family members left behind to undertake extra-legal, often high-risk journeys in attempts to reach the United States, as undocumented migration is found to be more effective in achieving reunification (Herrera 2008). Evidence of Ecuadorians’ determination to reunite families is found in the ever-increasing number of minors apprehended en route to the United States with the aid of human smugglers (Herrera 2008).

United States’ Immigration Enforcement Efforts in Latin America

In the last three decades, the United States has initiated enforcement efforts outside its borders expressly intended to control transnational human movement, as part of the response to public and political panic regarding increasing Latino migration. First, the United States has worked through geopolitical relationships to influence transit countries’ immigration enforcement strategies. Beginning in the late 1980s, the United States increased pressure on Mexico and Central American countries to enforce their own

37 The near impossibility of legally-sanctioned family reunification has also had other effects, such as the normalization of transnational families who maintain relationships despite distance (Pribilsky 2004; Herrera 2008), and the development of non-traditional family forms (Escobar 2008; Herrera 2008).
borders (Jokisch 2001; Kyle and Liang 2001; Ramírez and Álvarez 2009). In 1996, the
United States led the formation of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), also
known as the Puebla Process, creating a forum for member nations to share strategies and
“best practices” for fighting migrant smuggling (Falconí and Ordoñez 2005). The RCM
has provided an avenue through which the United States has extended enforcement
efforts outside national borders. For example, Operation Global Outreach, initiated in
1997, was a coordinated effort to intercept migrants and smugglers before they reach the
U.S. border, through both joint policing efforts and U.S.-led training of participating
states’ immigration authorities (Coleman 2007a). Coleman (2007a) notes that these
operations are remarkable for the way in which they are anticipatory in space and time.

The United States has paid particular attention to Mexico after 9/11, as the last
country through which undocumented migrants pass before attempting to cross the
United States’ southern border. Accordingly, Mexico has closely aligned its own border
security approach with that of the United States. The country increased its immigration
policing on the U.S.-Mexico border as part of the 2002 bilateral Border Partnership
Action Plan, and it has greatly expanded policing on the border with Guatemala through
its Plan Sur (Coleman 2007a). The outcome of these activities “is no less than the de
facto U.S. immigration policing abroad by Mexican forces” (Coleman 2007a, 621) and a
movement south of the U.S.-Mexico border (Coleman 2007a). Increasingly, the United
States is formulating more bilateral agreements through which transit countries

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38 RCM member nations are Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala,
Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and United States. Ecuador currently holds observer status
(Regional Conference on Migration 2010).
(particularly in Central America) apprehend, detain, and deport undocumented foreign-origin migrants, prematurely curtailing their journey north (Repatrian a ecuatorianos capturados en alta mar 2008). For example, Guatemala’s Venceremos 2001 (We Shall Overcome), a plan to apprehend and deport migrants on their way north, was directly funded by the United States (Peutz and De Genova 2010).

Second, the United States has geographically expanded its own migrant interception activities, via policing at sea conducted by the U.S. military and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Until the surge in Caribbean migration in the early 1980s, the mission of the USCG was primarily search and rescue. As a result of changing policy after the Mariel Boatlift of Cuban migrants and concurrent Haitian sea migration, the USCG assumed the role of a partner with the INS (and now ICE and the Border Patrol) in immigration enforcement through migrant interdictions at sea (Palmer 2009). This transformation in USCG roles has gone hand in hand with its increasing focus on drug interdiction (U.S. Congress House of Representatives 2009). In 1999, in a move that significantly broadened its western hemisphere activity beyond U.S. and Caribbean waters, the U.S. military established three “Forward Operating Locations” in Latin America: in Ecuador (closed in 2010), El Salvador and the Dutch Antilles (Flynn 2005). These bases’ leases technically limited U.S. activities on and from the bases to those related to combating narcotics trafficking. Evidence of “mission creep,” however, has been high, such as obvious participation of vessels using the Ecuador base in the interception of migrants at sea (Flynn 2005).
Since 9/11, the increasing conflation of migration with terrorism has provided further justification for the funneling of resources to migrant interdiction (Finley 2004; Flynn 2005). For example, the administration of President George W. Bush warned that any migrants arriving by sea were a threat to national security. Bush suggested that terrorists could try to pass as Haitian asylum seekers (Wasem 2010), and claimed that Al Qaeda was operating on Ecuador’s borders (Flynn 2005). In this context, the USCG came under control of the DHS, and its powers and mission have been further expanded.

Migrant interception at sea – often in cooperation with the U.S. Navy – is now a top U.S. activity in the Eastern Pacific. Relying on bilateral agreements, the USCG and the Navy typically land intercepted migrants in transit countries, which then detain and deport the migrants to their country of origin (Repatrian a ecuatorianos capturados en alta mar 2008). In some cases, foreign navies also intercept migrants at sea, essentially on behalf of the United States. Thus, intercepted migrants are prevented from getting any closer to the United States, or from accessing legal rights to which many migrants on U.S. soil are entitled. Attesting to the importance of these activities, when Ecuador’s President Correa refused to renew the Manta base lease in 2010, the United States instead developed a series of bases in Colombia from which to continue drug and migrant interception efforts. Today, the United States has bilateral agreements with twenty-six countries in Central and South America which (depending on the specific provisions of each agreement) allow the USCG to board and pursue flagged vessels, patrol territorial waters of other countries with sea and aircraft, and investigate suspected smuggling activities (U.S. Congress House of Representatives 2009). While these agreements focus on counter-
narcotics interdiction, migrant interdiction often occurs as a matter of course (Finley 2004; Flynn 2005). Since 1980, the USCG has intercepted over 350,000 migrants at sea (U.S. Congress House of Representatives 2009).

Third, U.S. immigration enforcement activities have also been extended to within Ecuador’s borders. For example, for several years the ICE, which maintains offices in the Quito Embassy and Guayaquil consulate, worked directly with a unit of the Ecuadorian National Police, called the Anti-Contraband Operative Unit (Cuerpo Operativo Anti-Contrabando, or COAP), in efforts regarding trafficking, smuggling, child pornography, and prostitution. The ICE periodically instructed COAP to send agents to migrant exit hotspots (i.e. particular coastal cities) in response to tips, detain potential migrants, and verify their identities. In these operations, non-Ecuadorians were detained and deported to their country of origin, and Ecuadorians were usually released.³⁹ A second ICE in-country strategy was to place pressure on the Ecuadorian government to improve the security of its national identity cards to make them more difficult to falsify. Foreigners are easily able to obtain an Ecuadorian identity card and use it to reach a country closer to the United States for which Ecuadorians do not need visas (such as Honduras). The ICE believed that more secure cards would reduce human smuggling out of Ecuador.⁴⁰

Despite this multi-pronged approach to international migration, Ecuadorians continue to migrate. In fact, their rates of migration have only accelerated, and the source

³⁹ U.S. involvement with COAP, however, was abruptly terminated in a 2009 scandal, in which Correa accused an ICE official of using foreign aid to attempt to control the police and subsequently expelled him (El Universo 2009).

⁴⁰ The source for this information regarding COAP and identity cards is an undisclosable source at the U.S. embassy, from a 2007 interview conducted by the author.
regions and groups have diversified. What, then, occurs at the nexus of the infeasibility of migrating legally, increasing extra-territorial deterrence efforts, and heightened border and interior policing in the United States? The answer signifies a profound lack of foresight on the part of U.S. policymakers: impetus for human smuggling.

**The Development of Human Smuggling from Ecuador to the United States**

Human smuggling operations between Ecuador and the United States have developed in direct relationship to the increasingly restrictive and spatially ambitious U.S. immigration policies. As numerous scholars have argued, the relationship between states’ immigration policies and illicit economies of human migration is intimate and recursive (Salt and Stein 1997; Andreas 2001; Koser 2001; Kyle and Dale 2001). Today, the many obstacles faced by Ecuadorian migrants during their northward journey have made the contracting of human smugglers nearly essential (Kyle and Dale 2001; Kyle and Liang 2001; Spener 2001; Falconí and Ordoñez 2005). U.S. policies also shape the on-the-ground operation of smuggling networks, as migration journeys become more dangerous, expensive, and time-consuming.

The earliest Ecuadorian migrants, documented or not, simply flew directly to the United States. As the United States increased border enforcement efforts, the trip became more circuitous, longer, and costly. Beginning in the 1970s until around 1985, undocumented migrants instead flew to Mexico, then crossed the U.S.–Mexico border by land (Jokisch 1997; Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). A system quickly developed in Ecuador to facilitate these migration endeavors, particularly for Ecuadorians who were not
wealthy and did not already have family members in the United States able to pay for the journey. Human smugglers, known at first as *pasadores* and today as *coyotes* or *coyoteros*, facilitated illicit migration by making travel arrangements. For example, they obtained necessary documents (such as a legitimate visa for Mexico, or a falsified U.S. visa or passport) and connected migrants with local high-interest moneylenders, called *chulqueros* (Jokisch 1997; Kyle and Liang 2001).

As the United States pressured Mexican and Central American countries to step up their enforcement practices in the late 1980s and 1990s, Ecuadorians’ transnational mobility patterns became even more complex. When Mexican visas became increasingly difficult to obtain, smugglers started routing migrants through Central American countries, into Mexico, and then across the U.S.-Mexico border. At the same time, however, due to U.S. pressure on transit countries as described above, migrants faced increasing obstacles in Central America (Jokisch 1997; Ramírez and Álvarez 2009). Coinciding with *la crisis*, in the late 1990s a new route emerged and was widely used for almost a decade: by sea from Ecuador to Guatemala, Nicaragua, or (until 2002) Mexico, and then north by land (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; Ramírez and Álvarez 2009). The popularity of the new route was reflected in the sudden jump in 1999 of Ecuadorians intercepted at sea by the U.S. Coast Guard patrolling in the Eastern Pacific (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; García 2005; U.S. Coast Guard 2011).41 Anecdotal evidence from my fieldwork in 2008 and 2009 suggests that while this sea route declined in popularity,

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countless combinations of smuggling routes from Ecuador to the United States are in use as smugglers attempt to manipulate nations’ varying entry policies. For instance, a currently preferred method is to fly from Ecuador to Honduras, taking advantage of a Honduran law allowing Ecuadorians to enter without a visa, then travel north by land. Alternatively, many Ecuadorians travel all the way from Ecuador to the United States by land. Today, Ecuadorians en route risk detention and deportation not just from the United States, but from many countries through which they may pass. Ecuadorian migrants have been deported from countries such as Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama (Jokisch 2001; Falconí and Ordoñez 2005; Ramírez and Álvarez 2009).  

In direct relationship to this diversification of enforcement efforts, human smuggling from Ecuador to the United States is growing at one of the fastest rates for such operations in the world (Thompson and Ochoa 2004). Local coyotes have developed business relationships with an increasingly vast and complex network of smugglers throughout Central America and Mexico. Rarely does an Ecuadorian smuggler travel all the way to the United States; instead, migrants are handed off from one group of smugglers to another (Kyle 2000; Thompson and Ochoa 2004; Ramírez and Álvarez 2009). In fact, the business of human smuggling (Salt and Stein 1997) has become important to innumerable people all along the various migration routes. This includes not just smugglers and moneylenders, but also drivers, people who house and feed migrants,  

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42 The majority of deportations are still from the United States; a 2008 Ecuadorian government report estimated that 79 percent of deportations were from the United States, 8 percent from Mexico and Central, and 9 percent from European countries (Defensoría del Pueblo 2009).
vendors who sell goods and services to migrants (typically at inflated prices), banks and other organizations facilitating money transfers, and corrupt government officials and police officers (Ramírez and Álvarez 2009). As Ecuadorian smuggling networks have developed in extent and sophistication over the past two decades, Ecuador has become a South American hub for smuggling to the United States. Accordingly, migrants of other nationalities, including Peruvians and Colombians, have been found on interdicted Ecuadorian vessels. Ecuadorian smugglers have also made connections outside of the Americas, as evidenced in the recent arrival of Chinese migrants in Ecuador who are quickly fed into Ecuador’s northward smuggling networks (Bowditch 2009b). Recent reports indicate that increasing numbers of Indian migrants are being plugged into Ecuador’s networks as well (Marosi and Becker 2011).

Hardening enforcement regimes have heightened risk and danger for migrants. The sea route, for example, is particularly dangerous. Largely due to overcrowding and the use of unseaworthy vessels, hundreds of Ecuadorians have died during this leg of their journey (Thompson and Ochoa 2004). There are countless other risks for Ecuadorians migrating to the United States. Many migrants recount experiences of fraud, robbery, and being held hostage until their family pays additional money (Thompson and Ochoa 2004; Falconí and Ordoñez 2005; Ramírez and Álvarez 2009). Many hopeful migrants have been victims of fraud even before leaving Ecuador, indebting themselves to a smuggler who disappeared with their money before the trip began (Falconí and Ordoñez 2005). Others tell of physical abuse, inhumane conditions, hunger, dehydration, temperature extremes, and fear. Women especially face additional risk of sexual abuse
(Thompson and Ochoa 2004; Camacho and Hernández 2005b; Ramírez and Álvarez 2009). Journeys can also end in death in one of the many legs involved, due to physical conditions of the journey or acts of brutality (Falconí and Ordoñez 2005). For example, Ecuadorians were among the seventy-two migrants murdered in gang violence in Mexico in August 2010 (AFP 2010; Archibold 2010). Such incidents are occurring with increasing frequency especially in northern Mexico.

Increased risk for migrants is accompanied by rising cost and more time en route. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the cost of an illicit trip to the United States was approximately $1200 (Jokisch 1997). In 1995, smuggled migrants paid around $6000 (Jokisch 1997); in 2001, $7,000 to $9,000 (Jokisch 2001); and in 2005, over $13,000 (Jokisch and Kyle 2008). During my fieldwork in 2008 and 2009, $15,000 was a typical price. While some migrants pay for their journey with funds provided by family already in the United States, the majority pay for all or part of the trip by taking out high-interest loans from local lenders. Interest rates between 5 and 8 percent monthly mean that migrants end up owing thousands of dollars more than their original loan, making repayment a difficult process lasting years (Jokisch 2001). Failed journeys (or, sometimes, the abandonment of families in Ecuador upon arrival in the United States) can lead to the loss of property and homes put up as collateral.43 While smooth journeys may take as little as ten days, many migrants report journeys of weeks or even months (Jokisch and Kyle 2008), which can become even longer in cases of kidnapping or detention in transit countries.

43 During my fieldwork, the economic recession also decreased migrants’ opportunities for employment in the United States, thereby increasing difficulties with maintaining loan payments.
Regardless of the severity and extent of U.S. immigration control efforts, migration from Ecuador to the United States continues. While the hardening of immigration policy frequently fails to halt migration, it does tend to cultivate ever more complex and extensive human smuggling networks. It also alters the spatiality of migration patterns, in terms of routes, tactics, danger, and cost. Basically, when a new policy or practice is put into place targeting a particular mobility pattern, migrants and smuggling operations adapt by changing geographical routes and methods. The pairing of migrants’ need to travel with smugglers’ determination to continue doing business virtually ensures that this response will repeat endlessly. What’s more, a degree of responsibility for constantly increasing U.S. migration can be attributed to smugglers, who often actively recruit new migrants in order to maintain and grow their business (Kyle and Liang 2001; Falconí and Ordoñez 2005). We see that smuggling operations and immigration enforcement policies exist in a recursive, dependent relationship to one another.

**Conclusion**

Neo-colonial relationships from Ecuador’s post-Independence period to the present day have contributed to the increasing mobility – first domestic, now international – of Ecuadorians. Critical drivers of contemporary mobility are persistent destination country demand for migrant labor and the instability of Ecuador’s government and economy. Neoliberal influences have been especially central to the development of these relationships and, therefore, the increasing centrality of migration
to Ecuadorian life. While U.S. influence alone is not responsible for Ecuadorian migration, it has clearly played a formative role.

The United States has instituted a range of policies purporting to slow or stop immigration, including increased difficulty for obtaining legal permission to migrate, hardening of the United States’ territorial borders, and extension of the U.S. border south through cooperation with other countries. The specific ways in which these policies have influenced migration patterns, however, show a clear mismatch with U.S. policymakers’ stated objectives. That is, while the overall deterrent effect on Ecuadorian international mobility is mixed, U.S. policy has made Ecuadorian migration north more costly, dangerous, and contributed to the development of the human smuggling industry between Ecuador and the United States. Still, Ecuadorians continue to migrate north. As Kyle and Liang (2001, 208) state, “Clearly, the US-Mexico border enforcement and anti-smuggling policies have done little to deter a substantial flow of illegal migrants from Ecuador.” For instance, the increasing chance of being apprehended en route has simply led smugglers to include more attempts in their asking price (Jokisch and Kyle 2008).

The design of hardening migration policies based on the assumption that they deter migration often proves shortsighted because of failure to take into account the deep-seated structural factors propelling migration. As Nevins (2007, 241) writes, “That many individuals choose to migrate in the face of the ever-hardening boundary between the United States and Mexico and associated risks speaks to the power of the forces driving migration.” Scholars have found that migration policies of destination countries often

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44 Anecdotal evidence during my fieldwork suggests that some smugglers now offer five attempts.
have little to no influence on personal migration decisions (Black et al. 2006; Collyer 2007; Nevins 2008). This reality bears out in the southern Andes of Ecuador, as I explore in Chapter Seven. The Ecuadorian case also illustrates the relationships of interdependence that are generated between states against the backdrop of globalization (Sassen 1988; Bauder 2006). Human mobility from less to more economically successful countries is a logical consequence of the formation of transnational ties related to trade, militarization, political forms, and cultural influence (Sassen 1988). Indeed, throughout the history of Ecuadorian migration, particular patterns have developed at the nexus of economic, political, and cultural factors originating from the United States.

The remainder of this dissertation focuses on detention and deportation as part of the relationship between the United States and Ecuador. The data generated by this project suggests that by increasing household instability in countries of migrant origin and further immiserating migrants and their families, detention and deportation are among the factors that actually deepen the interdependence of these two states. Indeed, these practices may even contribute to increased Ecuadorian migration. As the hub of Ecuadorian migration to the United States, the Azuay-Cañar region proved an ideal location from which to examine this relationship. The next chapter describes the methodology behind the research.
CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology for a Transnational Ethnography of Detention and Deportation

I waved at the security guard as I entered the Casa del Migrante, walked through the central courtyard of the old colonial house, and ascended the creaky wooden steps to the second floor. When I walked into the office of Legal Assistance, there were already two young women sitting there, one holding a squirming baby. Carmen was filling out fichas, forms, taking information on the women’s husbands, Santiago and Eduardo, brothers-in-law who had left Ecuador one month earlier to travel together to the United States. Santiago had called his wife sixteen days before to say that they were detained in Arizona, but the women had not heard anything else since then. It was the second migration attempt for both men; their attempt one year earlier had resulted in deportation. The women wanted to know what was happening: Where were they? Were they okay? Would they be deported? If so, when?

As I shrugged off my computer backpack, Carmen introduced me and asked, “Can you call right now?” “Sure,” I answered, “let’s go across the hall.” The two women followed me to the empty meeting room and watched as I pulled out my computer, turned it on, and plugged in my Skype headset. They stood nervously until I pulled up chairs and invited them to sit. I looked over the forms Carmen had filled out and asked for a few more details. I began by calling Florence, a principal site of migrant detention in Arizona. My call to the Florence ICE office eventually went to the information desk voicemail, and I realized that this search – like most – would not be immediately
completed. I explained to the women that I often could not obtain information right away, but I would keep trying throughout the day. They thanked me and left.

An hour later I tried the Florence ICE office again, with the same result. I then called the Phoenix ICE office, and the man who answered said that he could only search “the system” if I had the men’s “A Numbers,” or Alien Registration Numbers. Though I explained that their family members in Ecuador did not have that information, he firmly repeated that it was policy to only search with an A Number, not just names. Next, I tried the Florence Detention Center, and a woman quickly checked the inmate roster, said that both men were there, gave me their A Numbers, and explained that their prior deportation orders had been re-instated and travel documents already requested.

I called the men’s wives to tell them. Both seemed sad when they learned that the men would not be allowed to stay in the United States, but anxious to learn when they would arrive in Ecuador. Santiago’s wife then spoke with Carmen to inquire if there were any avenues for recouping their $15,000 smuggling fee. They had mortgaged their farm land to finance a loan to pay the smuggler, and they were now facing loss of the land as well as their home which sat on it. The smuggler was no longer answering her phone, and the family did not know of any other way to get in touch with her. Carmen had to tell Santiago’s wife that there was little that could be done without more information regarding the smuggler.

Just two days later, the Casa (via the Ecuadorian foreign ministry) received a new ICE list of deportees arriving the next day. Santiago’s name was on the list, but Eduardo’s was not. I called their wives to report this; Santiago’s spouse was excited,
while Eduardo’s expressed confusion and disappointment. I promised to try to figure out why Eduardo was not coming at the same time as his brother-in-law. I again called the Florence Detention Center, but this time the person with whom I spoke refused to answer my questions, and told me that that I had to call the Florence ICE office. When my call there was eventually answered, I was again asked for an A Number, and this time I had it. The employee explained the only reason for Eduardo’s delay that she could see in “the notes” was that his paperwork had not arrived yet. He was deported two weeks later.

**Introduction**

The questions driving this project’s methodology are directly linked to the genealogies and discussions elaborated in Chapters Two and Three. I explored ways in which national security concerns overlap with historically embedded processes of racialization and criminalization to shape U.S. state responses to immigration. I illustrated how these responses to international mobility on behalf of the United States are tightly interwoven with, and in many ways drive, Ecuadorian migration to the United States. Through my methodological focus on detention and deportation, I aim to sketch the contours of these state responses to immigration, particularly as manifested in everyday life, both within U.S. borders and outside of them. Within U.S. borders, I scrutinize the structure and operation of the detention and deportation system, asking: *What are the daily realities for an immigration system that is created at the intersection of the master narrative of homeland security, and historically embedded processes of racialization and criminalization? How do longstanding objectives of social control over*
immigrant labor overlap with the more recent envisioning of detained migrant bodies as sources of profit to influence this system? Outside U.S. borders, I examine reverberations of detention and deportation in a country of migrant origin, guided by the questions: How do detention and deportation infiltrate everyday life at the scales of the individual, family, and community? How does the structural embeddedness of international migration in Ecuador intersect with U.S. policymakers’ social control goals of deterrence? Through these queries, I seek to interrogate the policymaking state itself. As evident in the above vignette of the actual conduct of research, I approached this objective ethnographically. Guided by the epistemology elaborated in Chapter One, I endeavored to conduct on ethnography of U.S. detention and deportation policy, from outside U.S. territory.

I now explain how I conceptualize this “ethnography of a policy:” as a project that is complementary to (and inspired by) previously realized ethnographies of the state. I discuss the value of embodiment in studying the state and state policy, and explain this project’s methodological contribution of periscoping as a technique for embodiment. Next, I describe the research methods employed during the course of fieldwork in Ecuador, conducted primarily in 2008 and 2009. In addition to participant observation, as described in the above vignette, this ethnography of policy employed interviews and document analysis. Then, I reflect on my own participation in the research process and the ways in which I personally shaped the knowledge produced. This process of reflection works to expand feminist ideas of subjectivity. It also, I suggest, acts as an integral part of my ethnography of detention and deportation policy.
Ethnography of a Policy

How and where do we locate the state methodologically?

Mountz 2003, 628

As elaborated in Chapter One, post-structural conceptualizations of the state push geographers to imagine power as dispersed and not anchored in territory or limited to fixed territorial boundaries (Agnew 1995; Glassman 1999). Critical geopoliticians recognize that political power is not necessarily state power (Dalby 1991; Allen 2004). Feminist scholars have stressed that precise conceptual boundaries imagined between state and non-state actors are often false (Mountz 2003, 2010), and that political life plays out in both formal and informal spheres (Secor 2001; Cope 2004). They also call for the incorporation of emotion into geopolitical considerations of fear, in order to conceptually link political processes to everyday expressions of emotion (Pain and Smith 2008; Pain 2009; Hall 2010).

Ethnography, a methodological approach that fosters exploration of “the tissue of everyday life” (Herbert 2000, 551), answers these critical challenges for a new approach to studying the state. Through close observation, the ethnographer is able to access “the processes and meanings that undergird sociospatial life” (Herbert 2000, 550, emphasis in original). The ethnographic researcher does not just record what she sees, but also re-interprets and adds to its meaning in ways that produce new knowledge. While far from
new to migration research broadly speaking (Heyman 1995; Coutin 2005) or to the
discipline of geography, ethnography is a relatively novel tool for understanding the state
and policy, particularly in political geographic research (Herbert 2000; Mountz 2004;
Megoran 2006). By “shatter[ing] the hard surface of officiality” (Heyman 1995, 264-5),
etnographic methods have the potential to pry open the state on an intimate level,
Ethnography also provides a means for studying multiple manifestations of the state
(Gupta 1995; Hansen and Stepputat 2001), and creates new sites for the study and
analysis of the state. Hansen and Stepputat (2001, 14) suggest, “By treating the state as a
dispersed ensemble of institutional practices and techniques of governance we can also
produce multiple ethnographic sites from where the state can be studied and
comprehended in terms of its effects, as well as in terms of the processes that shape
bureaucratic routines and the designs of policies.” Consequently, as Herbert (2000, 555)
posits, ”The veneer of a seamless, transcendent entity is stripped away via intensive
analysis, to reveal the processual, messy and ever-contingent reality of everyday state
action.” Through ethnographies of the state, therefore, researchers are able to get at the
varied, subjective and often contradictory range of influences shaping ways in which the
state is manifested in daily life (Gupta 1995; Heyman 1995; Herbert 2000; Hansen and
Stepputat 2001; Mountz 2003, 2007, 2010). Ethnographic study of the state also expands
inquiry beyond elite discourses (Megoran 2006), and fosters attention to individual
stories, the body, and daily life (Dodds 2001; Dowler and Sharp 2001; Mountz 2004,
2010). Ethnographies can be particularly useful in critical, localized analyses of the state
My project, an ethnography of the U.S. policy to detain and deport migrants, is a complementary project to ethnographies of the state. Previous ethnographies of the state have been (for the most part) geographically located inside the physical boundaries of the state under scrutiny (e.g. Gupta 1995; Heyman 1995; Mountz 2004, 2007, 2010). Here, by applying ethnographic methods to a policy, I aim to stretch the siting and analytic possibilities of state ethnographies. That is, I suggest that by tracing a particular policy from outside the territory of the state under study and back to within that state, one can extend the methodological and epistemological potential of ethnographies of the state. As other scholars who use ethnography to study the state have done, my ethnography of policy focuses on the actions of bureaucrats and policy design (see Gupta 1995; Heyman 1995; Mountz 2004, 2007, 2010). In contrast to – and as a methodological addition to – previous ethnographies of the state, my ethnography of a policy also includes attention to ways in which policy is experienced outside the policymaking state’s borders, by people ostensibly not members of the state performing the policy.

**Periscoping as Embodiment**

The feminist methodological strategy of *embodiment* was critical to this ethnography of policy, to tease out ways in which state policies are experienced at scales finer than the state, as well as in locations outside the policymaking state’s borders. Embodiment is an important tool for materializing and exploring the state’s role in
shaping individual lives and experiences. My use of embodiment builds on a substantial
body of work by feminist scholars (e.g. Nast and Pile 1998; Pratt 1998; McDowell 1999;
Nelson 1999; Dowler and Sharp 2001; Nagar et al. 2002; Hyndman 2004; Mountz 2004,
2010). Feminist geographers, including migration researchers, have conducted analyses at
the scale of the body since the 1990s (Silvey 2005). I draw in particular, however, on
feminist political geographer Mountz’s application of embodiment to studying the state
the feminist strategy of embodiment that the actual power of the state materializes in
daily practice.” Mountz employs embodiment as a tool for studying how Canadian civil
servants struggled to enact policies responding to the arrival of smuggled Chinese
migrants. Mountz’s institutional ethnography (Smith 1987) of the department of
Citizenship and Immigration Canada focuses on the daily actions of bureaucrats to
embody the state, “to understand who enacts policy and in what way” (2004, 327), and to
draw attention to ways in which key aspects of the state are hidden in bureaucratic
maneuverings. Used in this way, embodiment extends political analysis beyond the scale
of the state, and Mountz thus shifts focus to people (bureaucrats) and the ways in which
they experience and interact with state policies. This shift to the scale of the body
“reveals processes, relationships, and experiences otherwise obstructed” (Mountz 2004,
328).

In my research, embodiment is instrumental in understanding the enactment of
migration policy, both within and outside of U.S. borders. First, embodiment counters the
apparent opacity of the D & D system. Mountz (2010, 56) writes that, “Immigration
departments appear to be disembodied institutions.” Similarly, I suggest, the U.S. D & D system projects the image of a sterile, dispassionate fortress. Through embodiment, I am able to consider the role of individuals’ actions and decisions in policy implementation (Mountz 2004, 2010), and uncover the central role played by human agency in shaping what policy looks like “on the ground” (Mountz 2004, 329). Second, embodiment fosters the construction of knowledge regarding reverberations of U.S. detention and deportation practices in Ecuador. My strategy, ethnography of a policy, includes narratives and experiences outside of the official realm of the state, but, as will become evident in the following chapters, very much inside the realm of state control. Embodiment thus contributes to a situated, finer-scale analysis of state policy beyond detention facilities and U.S. territory. Therefore, embodiment as I deploy it here facilitates a transnational, multi-sited, and multi-scalar analysis of the state.

In using the strategy of embodiment, I am committed to understanding how laws, ideas, and narratives associated with the state shift from the level of mere words and concepts to be given form, to be turned into personal experience, and to shape people’s lives. I endeavor to understand particular constellations of individual actions that collectively give flesh to the state. To say that the state is embodied by a particular individual (or group of individuals) is to assert that the individual’s perceptions, decisions, and experiences are in some way determined by policies and discourses theoretically produced at the level of the state, and these individual perceptions, decisions, and experiences reflect back to solidify and empower the state. To say that D & D system employees embody the state, for example, I mean that their actions make
policies and discourses regarding detention and deportation into a tangible, legible apparatus. To say that detainees’ family members and deportees in Ecuador embody the (U.S.) state, I mean that laws and narratives pertaining to the U.S. government fundamentally shape these people’s daily realities, perceptions, and decisions. To embody the state is to refuse to accept the state as a monolithic, secure entity. Embodiment as a methodological strategy, therefore, fundamentally contests the hegemonic projection of the state and the hierarchy upon which state power and authority depend.

In my exercise of embodiment, I developed a strategy I think of as “periscoping” to map the chaotic geographies of the detention and deportation system, within and outside of U.S. territory. Using a careful arrangement of mirrors and prisms, a periscope allows a viewer to see things out of her direct line of sight. As evident in the vignette opening this chapter, locating and acquiring information about detained migrants often required contacting a wide range of people and places, picking up on one bit of information in order to obtain another. This was one research activity for which the periscope metaphor was particularly apt. But periscoping also applies more broadly to my field approach. My research methods entailed careful calibration of resources at my disposal, and analysis was achieved through coordinating a variety of lenses. By combining data from detainee searches with that collected via interviews and document

45 While periscopes have come to be associated with military and state surveillance activities (some readers, for example, may associate periscopes with mid-twentieth century submarines), in my employment of the term I do not intend to make any oblique reference to these uses. Instead, I am attracted to this word simply because of a periscope’s basic function of facilitating sight where it was previously impossible. The first known periscope, for example, appeared in the fifteenth century to allow people to see over the heads of others in a crowd of people. In my employment of periscoping, therefore, I reference the fundamental purpose of a periscope, and not the range of ends for which it has been developed.
review, I was able to gradually map some of the ways in which the D & D system works, and to empirically link this these mappings to reverberations of this system in Ecuador. Relying on many different reflections in this way also illuminates some of the many individuals who embody immigration policy at the individual scale, both in the United States and in Ecuador. I gained a view of how individuals make micro decisions to enact and respond to policy in specific, localized ways. Periscoping also drew on my subjective position as a U.S. citizen in Ecuador; I was able to piece together information I already had as someone generally familiar with U.S. systems to build knowledge both specific to the D & D system, and specific to the requests of Ecuadorians in Ecuador. By periscoping, therefore, I was able to see what was otherwise obstructed at multiple scales and in multiple places; it facilitated the making of conceptual and empirical order, from the initial impression of detention and deportation as chaos.

The strategy of periscoping has another advantage, which pertains directly to my objective of promoting change in detention and deportation policy. The important work already being done by journalists and activists to point out problems in the D & D system often focuses on the most extreme cases, such as death due to negligent medical care, the plight of asylum seekers, or family detention. The information that becomes publicly available about detainees and places of detention usually comes from the limited number of people who have access to detention facilities, such as lawyers working with migrants who will appear before a judge, or advocate groups working with one place or group. By relying on multiple reflections, the periscope strategy accesses the experiences of the majority of detained migrants – those who never receive any special attention while in
detention, and whose stories are typically buried by their eventual deportation. By reconstructing these stories, this strategy lays bare the systemic nature and the banality of the profound problems within the D & D system, and issues that have been normalized and routinized as common, unquestioned practice.

As a final point regarding methodology, I realize that my approach to understanding the state is not just unconventional, but also, perhaps, geographically counter-intuitive. I analyze policies made and carried out in the United States from sites beyond U.S. borders, and this analysis – as evidenced in the opening vignette – hinges on personal, emotional connections with Ecuadorians in Ecuador, as well as phone calls made from thousands of miles outside the United States. I argue, however, that this strategy provides a powerful new tool for the analysis of immigration geopolitics. Periscoping is an intentionally political strategy, aimed at disrupting processes of policymaking as well as geopolitical inquiry itself. That is, by drawing attention to impacts of immigration policies which are not contained by nation-state borders, I illustrate that these policies cannot be assessed accurately without considering their extra-territorial reach. Furthermore, by considering ways in which U.S. policy slips within Ecuador’s borders into the most intimate corners of people’s lives, I insist that these ‘foreign,’ othered lives matter. This transnational ethnography of a policy thus aims to pry open the state, unsettle understandings of state borders, complicate master narratives of how policy works, and pull the critical geopolitical gaze beyond Western power holders.
I now describe the methods that facilitated the use of periscoping as embodiment, and, ultimately, an ethnography of U.S. detention and deportation policy.

**Research Design and Methods**

From the earliest stages of this project, I planned to employ multiple methods in order to add depth, breadth, and perspective to the research (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Findlay and Li 1999; McKendrick 1999). Research activities commenced in January 2007, when I began reviewing local Ecuadorian newspapers online, scanning them for information regarding migration. In July 2007, I made a month-long trip to Ecuador to conduct preliminary fieldwork. The bulk of fieldwork in Ecuador was carried out between November 2008 and August 2009, when I lived in the city of Cuenca in Azuay province. I also made short trips to Quito and Guayaquil as necessary. I continued document and media review during this time, engaged in participant observation, and conducted interviews. All time periods, places, and methods were instrumental in the development of an ethnography of detention and deportation policy by providing the range of prisms and mirrors necessary for periscoping.

**Participant Observation**

Participant observation is an ethnographic method “concerned with developing understanding through being part of the spontaneity of everyday interactions” (Kearns 2000, 108). Through the production of data via the researcher’s personal experiences and impressions, it is a key method for “access[ing] embodied forms of knowing” (Nairn
Participant observation can also be particularly useful for studying the state (Gupta 1995; Megoran 2006; Mountz 2007).

I engaged in participant observation in a wide variety of spaces: two places where I volunteered, conferences regarding local or national migration-related policy to which I was invited, and local events. My presence and, often, interaction in all of these spaces contributed to my understanding of the ways in which detention and deportation are embodied. My volunteer work, however, became the cornerstone of my ethnographic approach because of the space it provided for personally interacting with detainees’ family members and deportees.

Upon arriving in Cuenca in November 2008, I began volunteering one day per week at Movilidad Humana (Human Mobility), an agency within the Catholic charity organization Pastoral Social-Cáritas del Ecuador. During my preliminary research trip in 2007, Movilidad seemed to be at the center of local efforts to assist migrants and their

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46 Several events had to do with the growing number of Peruvian immigrants and Colombian immigrants and refugees in Ecuador and particularly in the Cuenca area. Organizations, agencies, and Ecuadorian policymakers are scrambling to formulate and enact policies and practices regarding immigration into the country. Another event was hosted by SENAMI (National Secretariat of the Migrant). Ecuador adopted a new constitution in September 2008 which includes clauses requiring significant revisions to existing laws regarding various migration issues. In an effort to gather ideas from local leaders on how to enact changes, SENAMI hosted regional conferences around the country.

47 These included, for example, a commemoration of migrants who died en route to the United States, International Day of the Migrant, the opening of a municipally-run home for refugee women, and the trial of an accused human smuggler.

48 My use of the category of “family member” is not intended in any way to reinforce heteronormative conceptualizations of what a “family” must include. However, I use this term instead of “household member” because the latter would be inaccurate. Thus, “family member” or “relative” indicates a relationship of concern between the person in Ecuador and the migrant in the United States, whether it be between siblings, parent and child, spouses, or friends.

49 The Pastoral Social of Ecuador belongs to an international network, Caritas Internacionalis, based in Rome. There are over twenty Pastoral Social offices around Ecuador.
families, and the director welcomed my offer to volunteer. When I returned sixteen months later, however, the landscape of local organizations working with migration issues had shifted. Two new government-run agencies, the municipal Casa del Migrante and the federal Secretaría Nacional del Migrante (SENAMI, National Secretariat of the Migrant), both just opened when I was in Cuenca in 2007, had since become the places to which Ecuadorians in the region seeking migration-related assistance usually turned. As a result, I usually had little to do at Movilidad, except for occasionally sorting email, filing papers, or translating something off the internet for the director. Consequently, in January I also began to volunteer at the Casa del Migrante. The Casa’s principal objective is to aid migrants and their families. It offers, among other things, legal advice, counseling services, free internet and videoconferencing, small capital project guidance, and it hosts events and workshops. I worked with Carmen Alvarado, the lawyer in charge of Legal Assistance, who welcomed me as another pair of hands and also as someone who could speak English, particularly helpful because of the high degree of migration to the United States. In contrast to Movilidad, I was constantly busy at the Casa, and within two months I was there four to five days per week. By April I stopped going to Movilidad Humana on a regular basis, though I continued to check in periodically and provide assistance as needed.

People came in to the Casa’s Legal Assistance office with a variety of inquiries. These included requests for information about Ecuadorian government programs,

50 The addition of these organizations is testament to the central role migration plays in Cuenca and the surrounding areas, as elaborated in Chapter Three. There also exists a fascinating undercurrent of competition between the various organizations, discussion of which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
questions about obtaining United States or European visas, requests for aid handling unfulfilled child support or children abandoned by migrants, problems paying migration debts, and issues with human smugglers. Deported migrants also occasionally asked for translation of deportation documents or information regarding available assistance. The most common requests, however, came from family members asking for help locating and acquiring information about Ecuadorian migrants detained in the United States. Since the Casa opened in early 2007, the Legal Assistance office had experienced a steady increase in such requests. These family members were often desperate for any information about the migrant. Before I began volunteering, Carmen usually handled these inquiries by sending an email to an Ecuadorian consulate in the United States or to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Relations. She rarely received replies, except in extreme cases (such as, for example, an Ecuadorian on trial for murder). I quickly recognized that perhaps I could help address these requests, because I spoke English, had a laptop computer set up to use the calling program Skype (the Casa is set up for wireless internet use), and possessed enough knowledge of U.S. systems to begin to try to navigate the complicated detention system.

In fact, my efforts to locate and follow the cases of detained Ecuadorians came to play a critical role in my research. Both my personal interactions with family members in Ecuador and the phone calls to the United States constituted important sites of participant observation. During the next eight months at the Casa, I worked on over eighty-five cases of detained migrants, to locate detainees in the D & D system, follow detainees until deportation, and check in with family members after deportation. While my volunteer
work did not include gathering specific socioeconomic data from detainees’ family members, I surmise that patrons of the Legal Assistance office represented a broad range of class and financial positions. Some wore traditional clothing indicating they belonged to indigenous groups. Family members resided in urban areas (either Cuenca, or smaller nearby cities), the many small towns in the region, or in rural, typically agricultural areas. To protect the identity of family members discussed in this document, I either assign them a pseudonym or refer to them by their family role (i.e. mother, brother-in-law, etc.). If the participant is a family member of an interviewed deportee, then I refer to her in relation to that interviewee, and use the interviewee’s pseudonym (explained below).

Through my work on these cases, I also came in contact with many different people in Ecuador in addition to the family members, such as Ecuadorians at other government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social workers, and lawyers.

My efforts within the D & D system entailed hundreds of phone calls to ICE offices and detention facilities, private detention centers, and county prisons. Personnel with whom I spoke included county jail officers and administrators, private jail facility contractors, social workers, police officers, lawyers, and members of activist groups working against detention and deportation practices. The identity of D & D system personnel was largely protected simply by virtue of the inherent anonymity of a phone call. Employees with whom I spoke typically provided only the name of the facility or office, and rarely a name or title.51

51 There were a limited number of instances in which I recorded names in my research journal in connection with certain phone numbers or detainee cases. If I refer to these individuals in this dissertation, I do so generically, i.e. “the woman with whom I spoke,” or “the officer,” etc.
I kept a detailed research journal of my daily activities at the Casa, in order to provide rich description and facilitate interpretation of my interactions as a participant observer, and to deepen understanding of data gathered through other methods (Geertz 1973; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; Valentine 2001). Notes were primarily recorded on my laptop computer. When I did not have my laptop with me or it was more appropriate to the situation, I hand wrote in notebooks, and later transferred the notes to the computer. At the conclusion of my time in Ecuador, I prepared a “how-to” guide of the search process for future volunteers, as well as a template for a brochure answering most frequently asked questions to give family members.

There are two ethical issues regarding participant observation particular to this project that I wish to address. First, various aspects of my subjectivity placed me in a potentially exploitative position of power over participants – both Ecuadorian family members and D & D system employees. The risk of exploitation is inherent in ethnographic research (Stacey 1991) as well as in research conducted by U.S. academics in the ‘Third World’ (Patai 1991). Ecuadorian participants’ perception of power and hierarchy is evident in the opening vignette in my interaction with the two women I was assisting when they acted deferentially by waiting to sit until invited. Being a U.S. citizen gave me an advantage in conducting the searches for detainees, but it also made it

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52 My research journal also included notes of interviews (even when interviews were recorded and later transcribed), as well as personal reflections and questions regarding the project’s trajectory, all important contributors to the research process (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995).

53 Both the guide, a sixteen-page document titled *Como buscar ecuatorianos detenidos en los Estados Unidos* (How to search for Ecuadorians detained in the United States) and the brochure template, titled *Información para familiares de migrantes detenidos en los EEUU* (Information for family members of migrants detained in the U.S.), are on file with the author, available upon request.

54 Patai (1991) puts these terms in quotes to raise important questions regarding the hierarchized processes of categorization in their making. While I share Patai’s concerns, I do not further elaborate here.
possible for me to extract “grist for the ethnographic mill” (Stacey 1991, 113) from family members who were desperate for information. While I attempted to minimize the risk of exploitation by acting in direct response to Ecuadorian participants’ needs, the risk was still indelible.

Additionally, it is worth discussing the fact that D & D system employees became participants in my research simply by virtue of my phone contact with them in the course of my volunteer work at the Casa. While this aspect of my participant observation arose organically as my activities developed in response to family members’ needs, it became a critical component of my fieldwork and provided important prisms for my “periscope” into the D & D system. I presented myself to employees with whom I spoke as a volunteer for the Casa. When I began making the calls, this accurately described the extent of my position and intent. As the calls evolved to become central to my research, I did not introduce additional information into how I presented myself, such as adding that I was also conducting research on U.S. detention and deportation. To do so, I believe, would likely have resulted in an abrupt end to these phone calls and, therefore, to my efforts to assist family members in Ecuador as well as an important component of my research activities. In my decision to not share the full extent of the information potentially yielded by the phone calls with employees, I privileged both the needs of family members to acquire information and my research objective of tracing the apparent chaos of the D & D system over concerns regarding exploitation of system employees.

Second, my activities at the Casa built up a service that continued only while I was present. Researchers engaging in participant observation recognize – and even
anticipate – that their presence may alter behavior at the research site (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995, Kearns 2000, Megoran 2006). Indeed, the bulk of the searches that I conducted for detained migrants would not have occurred without my presence at the Casa. What’s more, many family members came to the Casa del Migrante because they heard of the success I was having. When I left Ecuador, however, this service to family members was, for the most part, discontinued, despite my preparation of a guide for future volunteers. To some degree, therefore, the focus of my participant observation was dependent on my presence. This participant observation work critically contributed to my periscope into how detention and deportation are embodied, both in the United States and in Ecuador. Through interaction with the D & D system, I learned critical information about day-to-day operations, inconsistencies, and actors involved. Even the challenges of communicating, such as the unanswered calls and uneven responses evident in the opening vignette, provided revealing glimpses at the bureaucratic system behind U.S. migrant detention and deportation. My calls also illustrated that U.S. government policy is enacted by individuals, with their own opinions, beliefs, and personal stories (Mountz 2003, 2004, 2007, 2010). My work with family members allowed me to observe firsthand how U.S. policy infiltrates and influences life in Ecuador. I witnessed a range of daily experiences of detention-related insecurity. By creating space for particular situated knowledges regarding the detention and deportation system, these research activities invited a new gaze at the U.S. state and its policies.

55 For several months after my departure from Ecuador, I continued to conduct searches for the Casa, via requests emailed to me by Carmen Alvarado. I was unable to fulfill requests at the same pace I had maintained when doing the work full time, however, and Carmen gradually decreased her requests for assistance.
Interviews

Researchers conduct interviews to fill gaps in knowledge left by other methods, examine the complexities inherent to behavior, gain access to a range of perspectives and experiences, and as a method that potentially empowers and honors participants (Bloom 1998; Dunn 2000). I conducted semi-structured interviews (Dunn 2000) with two major groups: people who worked with migration in Ecuador in some capacity, and people who had been deported from the United States. In-person interviews were recorded with participant consent. For all interviews, including recorded ones, I took detailed handwritten notes which I later typed up, to provide yet another source for triangulation and to ensure rigor (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; McKendrick 1999; Winchester 2000).

Interviewees in the first group totaled twenty-five, and interviews were conducted in July 2007, and between November 2008 and August 2009. They included municipal government employees and elected officials in Cuenca and surrounding cities and towns; religious leaders; employees of federal, regional, and local groups; Ecuadorian federal government employees in Cuenca, Quito, and Guayaquil, and one ICE official at the U.S. embassy in Quito (See Appendix C for Table of Interviewed Functionaries). I contacted these people precisely due to their work; I obtained contact information from news articles, websites, and through recommendations of other interviewees – the snowball method (Babbie and Benaquisto 2002). These interviews typically occurred at the interviewee’s place of work. To protect the identity of these interviewees, I refer to them...
in this dissertation with a general explanation of the type of work that they do, for example, “official at the federal level,” or “employee of a Cuenca-based religious organization.”

Broadly speaking, my goal for these interviews was to better understand the Ecuadorian government’s approach to migration, the relationship between the United States and Ecuadorian governments in matters of migration, U.S. government activities in Ecuador concerning migration, and Ecuadorian perceptions of U.S. detention and deportation. I prepared a list of potential questions before each semi-structured interview, but then let the conversation follow the interviewees’ lead; I allowed her to expand on one answer more than others, or take the conversation in a different direction if she desired (Anderson and Jack 1991; Dunn 2000). The focus of these interviews evolved along with the larger project. In the first several months, I typically asked a range of questions trying to get at general trends in migration patterns and practices in Ecuador, including several focused questions about human smuggling. However, as detention and deportation became centered in my project, the questions I asked shifted accordingly. Questions were also tailored to the work and experiences of the particular interviewee.

The second set of interviews, of forty deportees, was planned and conducted as a joint effort with the Casa del Migrante between March and August of 2009. Carmen Alvarado and I collaborated with the goal of generating information of use to the municipality and other Ecuadorian agencies and organizations working with migration issues. Carmen assisted me in obtaining official permission from the municipality to
interview Casa patrons. She also made the initial contacts with many of the interviewees. I conducted the interviews. Together, we prepared a summary report of findings that was presented at a press conference at the Casa in December 2009 (I participated from the United States via Skype).

Participants had been deported from the United States between April 2008 and August 2009 (See Appendix D for Table: Interviewed Deportees, Basic Data). The average age of deportees interviewed was thirty; the youngest was twenty, and the oldest forty-seven. Of the forty people who consented to an interview, four were women and thirty-six were men. The percentage of women among my participants, therefore, is lower than overall deportation numbers, of which roughly 20 percent are women. Eighteen of the forty interviewees were caught near the U.S.-Mexico border attempting to migrate. Twenty-two were apprehended in the country’s interior, reflecting the contemporary rise in interior immigration policing. Of those apprehended in the interior, the average number of years living in the United States was 7.3. Thirteen interviews were conducted by phone, and twenty-seven in person. While I preferred to conduct interviews in person, many deportees could not or did not want to meet me in person due to a variety of

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56 This included permission to interview the family members of detained migrants. In total, however, I only conducted two interviews of family members because I felt that such interviews would usually generate data with too much overlap with data from participant observation.

57 This sixteen-page report, titled Informe de la investigación “La política estadounidense de detención y deportación de migrantes: Consecuencias para los migrantes ecuatorianos y sus familias” realizada con el apoyo de la Casa del Migrante (Report of the investigation “United States policy of migrant detention and deportation: Consequences for Ecuadorian migrants and their families” conducted with the support of the House of the Migrant), is on file with the author in both Spanish and English, available upon request.

58 I came to this gender breakdown by reviewing seven months (January to July 2009) of lists issued by ICE to the Ecuadorian government, of deportees arriving on DHS-run flights. Therefore, those Ecuadorians arriving via commercial flights (included in ICE yearly deportee counts) are not counted in this estimate.
reasons, such as distance from Cuenca, work schedule, or (I believe) a sense that a face-to-face encounter somehow endangered them. In-person interviews most often occurred at the Casa del Migrante, but also in the interviewees’ homes or places of work, restaurants, and parks. I traveled up to one and a half hours to smaller cities and towns for these interviews. Of the in-person interviewees, twenty-one allowed the interview to be recorded. No phone interviews were recorded.

My interviews of deportees were more structured than those of the first group in order to establish patterns and provide a basis for comparison of deportees’ experiences. I followed a question guide, trying to cover every question on the guide to the extent that it was appropriate to the particular interviewee (See Appendix E for Deportee Interview Question Guide). At the beginning of each interview, I asked the interviewee to choose a pseudonym for him or herself. Responses to this question were revealing. Some deportees were hesitant to give a false name, relating the request to how giving false information to the ICE had complicated their detention experience. This response is indicative of the difficulty Carmen and I had on numerous occasions in satisfactorily explaining the purpose and origin of the study (discussed more below). If it was an in-person interview, I also asked to record the interview. If a participant declined the request to record, I did not raise the issue again. Some participants asked for more information regarding who would hear the recording.\textsuperscript{59} Some said yes to the request to record in a defiant tone, stating that they wanted people to know how wrongly they had been treated.

\textsuperscript{59} In answer to this question, I explained that Carmen and I would hear the recording, and some excerpts would possibly be included in written form in the Casa report as well as in academic accounts that would later be written by me.
The efforts made to set up the interviews with deportees merit more discussion. While several deported migrants agreed to interviews when they came into the Casa del Migrante asking for some type of assistance, most deportees were contacted through the family members that came to the Casa seeking assistance while they were detained. I went through the binders of case forms kept by Carmen (and by me, while I was there) and extracted phone numbers for family members of returned migrants, and Carmen made most of the initial calls. Carmen’s assistance was critical to making these contacts. We attempted to contact approximately seven migrants or their family members for every interview that actually occurred. While I felt comfortable calling the family members with whom I had closely worked, Carmen and I agreed that many deported migrants might be suspicious of an estadounidense calling about their detention experience. Indeed, even Carmen’s efforts were often rebuffed. On several occasions, a deported migrant or a family member expressed anger at the Casa del Migrante, saying that it should have done more to get the deported migrant home faster, or (particularly for cases that transpired before my arrival) for not giving them more information. We presented the interview as an opportunity to contribute to a study being conducted by a U.S. student in collaboration with the Casa del Migrante, and to add to a report that the Casa was going to write and present to the Ecuadorian government. Many deported migrants we contacted were apprehensive about the study, or simply did not understand what the Casa

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60 These requests included inquiring about government services for returned migrants, asking for assistance with translation of documents, questions about how to recover belongings left in the United States, and asking for legal advice about how to try to return to the United States with proper documentation. In all of these cases, I explained that their consent to be interviewed was in no way connected to the request for assistance that they had made.
was or what it did. Many did not return phone calls, said they were not interested or were too busy to participate. In addition, a number of the family members that we contacted reported that the migrant had already returned to the United States. I also set up numerous interviews for which the interviewee never showed up.

Despite our efforts to accurately present interviews, there were multiple risks of exploitation of participants (Patai 1991; Stacey 1991). My position as a U.S. citizen and Carmen’s as an Ecuadorian municipal government employee may have put us in positions of power over interviewees. Also, there existed significant potential for participants to misunderstand the purpose or outcome of the interviews. This potential is linked to the complexity of the U.S. D & D system, fears about the reach of the U.S. government into Ecuador, and confusion regarding the relationship between Ecuadorian government entities and the United States. For example, it is possible that some deportees consented because they believed that not participating would put them at risk in some way (for example, endanger assistance received by their family from some level of the Ecuadorian government). Likewise, some may have believed that participating would benefit them in a way that it could not (for example, improve chances of success for a future U.S. visa application). Perhaps some believed that I was working for the U.S. government, which may have influenced their decision to participate either positively or negatively. In addition, interviewees may have felt obligated to participate in

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61 Some of this confusion stemmed from the fact that family members often went to multiple places seeking help. For example, SENAMI also attempted to assist family members in locating detained migrants. Also, family members may not have explained their efforts at the Casa to deportees.

62 This phenomenon prompted me to try to contact newly deported migrants relatively soon after their arrival, in case they intended to leave shortly.
reciprocation for the assistance that the Casa provided for their family while they were detained. While I tried to minimize these risks with thorough explanations, I must acknowledge that they exist.

The data gathered through these interviews served as important prisms and mirrors for periscoping into U.S. detention and deportation policy. Interviews of people who worked with migrants and issues of migration generally reflected more systemic consequences of the policy in Ecuador, as well as national, regional, and community responses. Interviews of deportees provided lenses into ways in which detainees embodied detention and deportation policy, how genealogies of immigration enforcement in the United States shaped detainee interactions with system personnel, and transnational reverberations after deportation at the scales of the individual, household, and community. Interviews, together with participant observation, also facilitated assessment of actually policy consequences alongside stated policy objectives.

*Document and Media Review*

A third primary research method for this project was analysis of Ecuadorian and U.S. news media and government documents. Through this method, I aimed to both broaden understanding of the political, cultural, and economic milieu in which the project was situated, and to deconstruct and analyze the discourses embedded in the texts under study (Forbes 2000). What’s more, as Gupta (1995, 385) notes, the analysis of media reports can reveal much "about the manner in which ‘the state’ comes to be imagined." Though I reviewed the selected documents and media with the understanding that “there
are multiple layers of meaning that can be derived from a text” (Forbes 2000, 127), this method provided important context for designing and carrying out other methods, and for interpreting findings. In my fieldnotes, I summarized pieces that I interpreted as pertinent, in order to make connections with other methods in the field, and to later return to such pieces during data analysis.

I reviewed, on an almost daily basis between July 2007 and December 2009, three Cuenca-based newspapers available online.63 I scanned these media for articles or announcements regarding migration. Research also included regular perusal of U.S. online media and government websites for news and information regarding immigration policies and laws, particularly those regarding detention and deportation. In addition, I reviewed numerous websites pertinent to the larger research project. These include sites of Ecuadorian government agencies and organizations, and those of migrant associations and organizations that support migrants and their families in some capacity. Finally, while in Ecuador, I collected a variety of documents that had to do with Ecuadorian migration, such as government propaganda, government and NGO brochures, and conference papers and agendas.

Like the other methods, document and media review provided important components for my methodological periscope. The data gathered through these activities critically refracted and complemented that gathered from participant observation and interviews to enable this ethnography of detention and deportation policy. Through attention to Ecuadorian news media and government documents, I deepened my

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63 The papers are El Tiempo, El Universo, and El Mercurio.
knowledge of migration-related events, debates, and responses, at multiple scales in Ecuador. It also fostered a sense of the many ways in which migration permeates daily life in Cuenca. For example, *El Universo* newspaper has a section of the paper entitled “Migración,” illustrating that for a significant portion of the paper’s readership, human mobility is of sustained interest. Additionally, newspaper review helped me to keep my finger on the pulse, so to speak, of the region when I was not living in Cuenca, as well as broaden my knowledge of local events and issues while I was in Cuenca. Media- and document-based knowledge of immigration policies and laws was also important in my efforts to understand the experiences of detained and deported migrants and their families in the context of contemporary policy and discourse in the United States, as well as to interpret the ways in which people working in migrant detention talk about and interact with detained migrants. The process of embodying the state, of locating it in diverse sites and at multiple scales, entails the use of diverse methods.

*Data Analysis*

Data analysis was based on principles of triangulation that enable the researcher to synthesize the various research components and solidify results (McKendrick 1999; Winchester 2000). Triangulation is particularly valuable for strengthening findings and ensuring rigor, as well as detecting inconsistencies (McKendrick 1999; Winchester 2000). Data analysis therefore entailed collectively assessing data gathered from all methods and stages of research. Research notes were typed up daily in the field. These primarily recorded participant observation, but also contained interview details, personal
reflections, and comments on document and media review. Recorded interviews were
transcribed by research assistants in Ecuador, and checked by me for accuracy and
corrected as necessary.\footnote{The one recorded interview conducted in English (of an
Ecuadorian-American lawyer with an office in Cuenca) was transcribed by a U.S. company, GMR
transcription.} Interview transcriptions, typed interview notes, and fieldnotes
were then open coded (Tesch 1990; Creswell 2002) using the software program
ATLAS.ti in order to establish patterns as well as to organize and process the large
amount of data collected. For example, codes were used to mark records of conversations
with D & D personnel, ways in which detention affected family members’ lives in
Ecuador, and reference places in interview transcripts where deportees discussed
particular conditions of detention or deportation.\footnote{I translated interview
excerpts included in the dissertation.} I also constructed tables of
interviewed deportees’ responses. Tables included basic personal data and details
regarding deportees’ detention, deportation, and post-deportation experiences. Additional
analysis included qualitative calculations where appropriate (i.e. average interviewee age,
number of places detained, time detained), and the mapping of detainee transfer paths. In
addition, I returned to the media reports and documents that I had gathered in the field.

The strategy of data analysis I employed linked neatly with the embodiment
technique of periscoping, for the way in which it relied on a careful assembly of a variety
of lenses. In its very definition, triangulation requires overlapping methods and cross-
checking findings. Analysis was a process that went beyond the simple identification of
patterns. It included attention to work done by previous researchers, relevant bodies of
theory, and background information gathered. It also involved “interpretation, reflection,
and re-evaluation that involves thinking about the meanings and implications of the data rather than merely the results” (Cope 2002, 51). Furthermore, it is important to remember that fieldwork never neatly ends. As Coutin (2005, 202) observes, “[t]he moment of writing thus becomes part of the moment of fieldwork.” Fieldwork is thus spatially and temporally extended through the process of analysis and “writing up” the project. I further suggest that a fully embodied approach to data analysis must incorporate self-reflection on the subjective role of the researcher – a task to which I turn in the next section.

Expanding Ideas of Subjectivity

*Work and life come to be entangled in the embodied, situational, relational practice that constitutes ethnographic fieldwork.*

*Cerwonka and Malkki 2007, 6*

Feminist scholars have made important strides in developing the idea of researcher *subjectivity*, or critical self-consciousness, acknowledging that the researcher’s personal and political position influences all aspects of the research process, from the initial decision about topic to analysis and dissemination (Haraway 1991; England 1994; Katz 1994; Staeheli and Lawson 1994; Sparke 1996; Hyndman 2001a; Cope 2002; Frohlick 2002; Cupples and Kindon 2003). Mani (1990, 25) writes that, “Gender, race,
class, sexuality and historical experience specify hitherto unmarked bodies, deeply compromising the fictions of unified subjects and disinterested knowledges.” Mohanty (1992) encourages scholars to develop a “politics of location.” Consequently, much attention has been paid to formative influences such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability, and ways in which they create particular webs of power and foster “partial perspective” (Haraway 1988). Accordingly, before beginning fieldwork, I had taken care to consider ways in which certain aspects of my positionality – white, female, middle-class, well-educated, U.S. citizen – could potentially affect my research.

Still, as Frohlick (2002) notes, enough consideration has not been given to the ways in which these positions influence the selection of fields as well as what actually occurs in the field. Here, I aim to fill this gap in scholarly attention and expand the critical concept of subjectivity, an endeavor which illustrates the multiple uses of embodiment in ethnography. That is, I am not just interested in how the state is embodied through its policies, but also how I embodied the research process. I posit that through the latter, I can enrich my knowledge of the former.

I proceed by identifying ways in which I personally embodied the research I conducted.66 I draw on Cerwonka and Malkki (2007, 36), who argue that researchers and their scholarship benefit from thinking about the “heuristic possibilities” of their body and personality, as resources to complement more traditional analyses. They write, “we would miss an opportunity if we were to deny that the body is a terrain of experience and understanding in research, especially ethnographic research.” I also acknowledge that

66 See also Billo and Hiemstra manuscript in review.
“our emotions matter” in all stages of research (Bondi, Davidson, and Smith 2005, 1; Bondi 2003), and that the inclusion of researchers’ emotions “adds a key dimension to conceptual understandings of state practices” (Mountz 2007, 39). In this section, therefore, I consider both my personal involvement in my fieldwork activities and the presence of my family with me in Ecuador.

_Tears, Guilt, and Responsibility_

I became emotionally invested in the research I did in Ecuador. The volunteer work proved especially intense at times. It was not uncommon for family members who came in asking for help to be upset, sometimes crying, despairing, confused, or angry. I developed a feeling of responsibility to these people that could be exhausting. Though my attempts to figure out the detention and deportation system were punctuated with feelings of satisfaction when I managed to locate someone, I was often frustrated. The fact that the government causing much of the hardship I was witnessing was my own also contributed to an acute sense of guilt. These emotions are evident in this excerpt from my fieldnotes on February 11, 2009:

I think I’m feeling somewhat stressed, overwhelmed, burdened about some of this work that I’m doing. There are several people now who come to me directly, who seem somewhat dependent on me about their cases. It is hard to keep explaining that there is nothing more I can do other than gather information. And hard to see how fucked up the ICE system is – all the time wasted, people
stressed out, money wasted. So inefficient, opaque, confusing, misleading. It shouldn’t be that way! I think I need to work on removing myself emotionally at the end of the day. Last night when K [my son] woke me up at 3, I couldn’t go back to sleep for thinking about several cases and what else I could try to do, and feeling pissed and indignant and sad that my own government operates in this way.

I responded viscerally to these stresses, going home on numerous days with pounding headaches. At times, I could not hold back my own tears when working with family members. For example, I worked with the elderly parents of Paúl over the course of eight months. Paúl served time in a county prison for almost six months before being transferred to ICE custody. In an unusual development, a prison employee said that she would arrange a time for Paúl to talk to his parents on the phone in her office. The parents traveled from over an hour away for the short phone call. After his mother and then his father talked to him using my Skype headset, both sobbing upon hearing his voice, my own tears were streaming down my face.

On several occasions, I also wondered if my involvement had gone too far. For example, the family of Carlos came in repeatedly, desperate for information regarding when he would be deported. Carlos’s two young daughters lived with his mother in Cuenca. Carlos was their only source of income, and since his detention months earlier, their economic situation had become precarious. Carlos’s oldest daughter and his mother came in to the Casa one day, and said Carlos had just called friends in the United States
from prison, and that he was threatening suicide if he did not get out soon. They begged me to try to call the county prison where he was being held, to at least make sure he was okay. I agreed, and to my surprise the prison employee who answered put Carlos on the phone. Both the daughter and the mother talked to him, hysterically begging him to not take his own life, while Carlos expressed despair, anger, and frustration with his seemingly indefinite imprisonment. As the situation developed, I brought both Carmen and the Casa’s staff psychologist into the room and collectively they were able to calm down Carlos, his daughter, and his mother. However, I felt that perhaps I never should have initiated that call in the first place; where exactly should the line of my own intervention be? I often wrestled with the question: would some family members be better off not knowing what I found? Or was it my responsibility to facilitate communication and the transfer of information as much as I was able, regardless of family members’ responses?

Such a rollercoaster of sentiments is certainly not unusual in fieldwork, and ethnography in particular “involves an engagement of the researcher’s senses and emotions” (Herbert 2000, 552; Bondi 2003; Mountz 2007). Emotional involvement influenced my research in myriad ways. For one, I was motivated to be persistent in the searches for detained migrants, and I felt responsible to the people I was trying to help. Occasionally, I felt that my volunteer work was driving the project in ways beyond my control. I was driven by a need I perceived on the part of family members, and I was personally embedded in the research. As Coutin (2005, 203) writes, “Ethnographers thus become subjects of the field; instead of adopting new perspectives, they are redefined or
reconstituted as the field shifts.” I cannot know if the research would have evolved differently – if I would have asked different questions, for example – if I had had more time to reflect and been less emotionally involved during the fieldwork period. In other words, my own positionality and personality influenced methodology and the conduct of research.

*How My Family Did and Did Not Shape the Field*

My husband and seven-month-old baby accompanied me to Ecuador. Bringing family into the field inevitably influences what the researcher does, as well as the knowledge that is produced (Flinn, Marshall, and Armstrong 1998; Starrs 2001; Frohlick 2002; Cupples and Kindon 2003). However, there is little academic precedent for considering the impact that being accompanied has on the actual conduct of research (Flinn, Marshall, and Armstrong 1998; Frohlick 2002; Cupples and Kindon 2003). Frohlick (2002, 52), arguing against the removal of family from the analysis of data generated by fieldwork, writes:

> Since when are our children and spouses and friends not part of our field sites in some manner, if only to complicate how we negotiate our research time and place? ... [I]t still strikes me as somewhat taboo to acknowledge the presence of our families, in other words to blur and even violate the boundaries of our field sites with visible traces of our personal lives and relationships, however
important these relationships and biographies are in enabling us to understand the phenomenon we are studying.

Here, to further fill out ideas of subjectivity, I intentionally incorporate reflections on how bringing my family to Ecuador shaped my research.

Many advisors and colleagues had predicted that having a baby in the field would open many doors for me as a researcher, and I also saw this suggested in the sparse but growing literature that exists on bringing family to the field (see for example, Starrs 2001; Frohlick 2002; Cupples and Kindon 2003; Scheyvens and Nowak 2003). This did not play out for me in the ways in which it was suggested it would, largely because the “field” is typically envisioned as a remote, ‘Third World’ site, not as an urban setting, for the researchers who have previously written about bringing children with them. While my blonde-haired baby certainly attracted attention when I was out and about with him, in Cuenca, as in urban cities in the United States, people typically do not bring their children with them to work. Therefore, I brought my son to daycare or left him home with my partner before I went to the places where I volunteered, and very rarely did I bring him with me except for several short visits to introduce him to people with whom I worked. I also did not bring my child with me for interviews that took place outside the Casa del Migrante because I knew that the attention he would require of me could make it impossible for me to complete the interview. It is thus accurate to say that my son was not physically present during most of my research interactions.

67 While tourists from all over the world are common in Ecuador, most do not bring young children. Many people were delighted to engage with my son by lightheartedly calling him “suco” (an Ecuadorian nickname for light-skinned people), making faces, or encouraging him as he learned to crawl and walk.
The fact that I had my family with me, however, did have numerous unexpected impacts. On several occasions when I mentioned to participants (family members of detained migrants or deported migrants) that my husband and child were with me, this admission seemed to shift participants’ views of me. I venture to say that it lent me an additional edge of credibility – or perhaps humanity – with research participants, and it may also have lessened fears that I was somehow connected to the U.S. government. Another participant response to my disclosure of my family’s presence greatly impacted me; more than one participant remarked on the unfairness of me being able to easily travel to Ecuador with my family, while many Ecuadorians suffered from family separation as a result of U.S. immigration policies (see Cupples and Kindon 2003). My family’s presence, therefore, served to highlight, to me, my own privilege and power (Katz 1994) and my own subjective position as a U.S. citizen, as well as the blind arbitrariness of U.S. detention and deportation. Furthermore, my own emotional investment in my role as partner and mother made me acutely aware of the hardship of family separation caused for Ecuadorians by the very thing I was researching, and added a sense of guilt to the emotions fueling my research. As Walton-Roberts (2010, 180) notes, certain perceptions and experiences of fieldwork, filtered as they are through particulars of one’s positionality, therefore “brought me emotionally closer to the communities I was researching, but also to my own conflicting position as a socially and economically embedded agent.”

Having my family with me during fieldwork also shaped the research project itself, particularly through influencing the times and places of research (see Frohlick
2002). Paradoxically, my husband’s and son’s presence may have curtailed efforts I otherwise would have made to enter into people’s homes and perhaps “get at” more of the home-based everyday impacts of detention and deportation. I was more likely to keep regular work hours than I would have as a lone researcher, and to want to spend evenings and weekends interacting with my family instead of conducting interviews or working on detainees cases. Therefore, I was largely unavailable for research precisely at the time when most Ecuadorians were in their homes, with their own families. In addition, I did not like to miss my son’s bedtime, so for the most part I did not make trips to remote towns and villages that would have required me to get home late at night or be gone multiple days. Consequently, I wonder if my data focuses unevenly on how detention and deportation impacts urban Ecuadorians, to the exclusion of rural and indigenous Ecuadorians.

Finally, I was frequently grateful that my family was with me. They provided important emotional support; there were days when I came home from working with migrants’ family members when I gave my son and partner some long, intense hugs. Also, had I been in Ecuador by myself, I would have been tempted to work constantly on my research. My family’s presence forced (and allowed) me to shift my focus elsewhere on a daily basis, and to take breaks, which was especially important considering the intensity of the fieldwork. My personal stance and family relationships, therefore, critically shaped the conduct of research and my fieldwork relationships.
Meaningful Messiness

As Hyndman (2001a, 265) notes, “Fieldwork is mediated and messy.” As these reflections attest, personal emotion and relationships undoubtedly play a role in research (Herbert 2000; Bondi 2003; Mountz 2007). Often, research interactions are not easy or simple, in innumerable ways and for many reasons. I have directly addressed some of the untidy, personal aspects of my research not as some type of self-confession that I will then dismiss (Katz 1996), but to productively consider the implications for the research process, data gathering, and analysis. In addition, self-awareness of the researcher’s subjectivity can be an “analytic asset” (Herbert 2000, 559). Indeed, awareness of my own subjectivity, including my expansion of subjectivity by incorporating attention to influences shaping the conduct of research, serve as additional, critical prisms for my embodied periscope on U.S. detention and deportation.

Conclusion

This project builds on existing scholarship utilizing ethnographies of the state to trace the reverberations of U.S. detention and deportation policy to and from Ecuador. I employ the feminist strategy of embodiment to identify multiple and often contradictory ways in which the state manifests itself in everyday worlds, at a range of scales. I propose periscoping as a particular technique of embodiment that incorporates a variety of lenses to assemble a coherent picture of elements of the state previously illegible. I suggest that periscoping may be a valuable tool for other researchers of policies that are at once obscured from view and spatially expansive. As a technique for an alternative visioning
of the state and statecraft, periscoping is a feminist tool for getting away from the “god-trick” of the masculinist, elitist, colonialist, all-knowing gaze (Haraway 1988). Here, it is especially important for shaping a methodology for deconstructing the master narrative of homeland security. Periscoping is thus a field and analytic strategy that facilitates the attainment of situated knowledges, by allowing the perception of webs of connection between points that at first glance may appear discrete and self-contained (Haraway 1988).

Through this methodology, I extended embodiment outside the territorial borders of the state under consideration to examine the transnational relationship between security and insecurity. I evaluated ways in which immigration policy is embodied within U.S. territory in the D & D system and in Ecuador, outside the bureaucracies constituting state policy and far away from the authors of statecraft. I therefore considered local and informal manifestations of state power, and also accessed U.S. policy in sites within the United States and in Ecuador simultaneously. Over the course of this project, the research process itself contributed to the construction of important information about the state (Mountz 2007). Through my discussion of subjectivity, I have endeavored to illustrate that even the embodied experiences of the researcher can be powerful analytical tools for geopolitical analysis.

The utility of this methodological approach is illustrated in the following chapters, which map the chaotic geographies of the detention and deportation system. Chapter Five develops the ways in which policy is embodied within U.S. borders through D & D
system employees. Chapter Six explores the experiences of detained migrants. Chapter Seven then surveys the embodiment of U.S. policy in Ecuador.
CHAPTER FIVE

“With them a dog is treated better than a migrant”:

The D & D System, Employee Insecurity, and Governmentality

As already discussed, the overlay of the master narrative of homeland security with interlocking economic, social, and political processes has propelled the establishment and expansion of a system for detaining and deporting migrants. Concurrently, geopolitical relationships in the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization produce a continuous supply of migrant bodies to fill this system. As elaborated in Chapter One, I contend that the D & D system, as a materialization of these processes and structural relationships, generates myriad chaotic geographies. In this and the following two chapters I explore three chaotic geographies in order to contribute to the project of embodying the state and its policies. Collectively, the arguments and empirics provided point to the power of these chaotic geographies to both produce insecurity and manufacture a cohesive state narrative of homeland security. I now turn to the first chaotic geography, the structure and operation of the D & D system.

D & D System Structure, Operation, and Discipline

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, immigration enforcement policies such as detention and deportation have important social control effects. Scholars have pointed to the disciplinary function played by punitive and restrictive policies for immigrant populations, to maintain them as flexible, vulnerable workers as well as to remind
immigrants of the power of the state (Nevins 2002; De Genova 2005; Kanstroom 2007a; Coleman 2008). These policies, too, work on the non-immigrant population in general to provide an “other” against which a homeland is defined and to critically shape the master narrative of homeland security (Kaplan 2003; Hyndman and Mountz 2008). The dehumanization of racialized immigrants central to this process of othering normalizes the treatment of immigrants as criminals: “The constant propagation of hate-filled rhetoric serves to dehumanize undocumented immigrants and renders them appropriate targets for law enforcement activities” (Golash-Boza 2009a, 286).

In this chapter, I explain the basic structure and operation of the D & D system. As I do so, I argue that the system’s organization interacts with discourses of homeland security to discipline employees’ behaviors and emotions. As members of the general public, employees (whatever their particular job) do not shed their pre-existing notions of immigrants upon beginning their employment. Their preconceived ideas of migrants are therefore likely based on or at least influenced by racialized stereotypes and assumptions of criminality. The D & D system itself, I suggest, functions in such a way as to corroborate employees’ prior conceptualizations. Detention facilities thus become sites where “hegemonic geopolitical discourse is not only hierarchically translated into everyday life, but also (re)produced through banal, embodied experiences and practices” (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simosen 2008, 118). Importantly, an additional product of this social control work is a haunting sense of ontological insecurity for employees. Ontological security, as defined by Giddens (1991), is the sense of stability an individual achieves through continuity and order. Ontological insecurity as I utilize it here is the
sense of instability and even fear provoked by the feelings of uncertainty and the perception of disorder. Employees’ sense of insecurity is conjured by the scripting of migrants as criminal, dangerous, and risky. Through what they witness in the course of their employment, I contend, employees’ sense of insecurity is deepened in ways that lend credibility to and acceptance of the concept of homeland security. In other words, the D & D system works performatively in support of the homeland security narrative by substantiating the paradoxical relationship between security and insecurity.

In making this argument, I draw on the work of several scholars who have used ethnography to study the perceptions and actions of individuals working in immigration enforcement. Mountz (2003, 2010) describes the intense process undertaken by Canadian Immigration officials to construct the identity of asylum-seekers in particular ways. While officials’ responses collectively produced a coherent narrative regarding asylum-seekers, Mountz emphasizes the significant role of individual subjectivity in shaping state practices. She also contends that the language bureaucrats used and the identities constructed have profound consequences for migrants’ experiences and outcomes. Heyman (1995) explores how the bureaucratic system of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (pre-DHS) does important “thought-work” on field officers to manufacture a particular “worldview” in which contradictory policies seem coherent and rational. He writes (1995, 263), “Bureaucratic thought-work thus locates an inevitable struggle: bureaucratic workers must think for themselves because of the nature of their tasks, yet they must be controlled as thinkers in order to ensure the regular production of control duties.” Heyman found that one consequence of this thought-work is that officers
see migrants with potentially legitimate rights claims as logistical problems, instead of as people deserving assistance.

Gill (2009) and Hall (2010) both focus on the actions and perceptions of personnel within detention centers in the United Kingdom through ethnographic research. Gill studies the frequent transfers of detained asylum-seekers. He argues that this forced mobility acts as a governmental technique on activists and detention center managers who are in a position of power to help asylum seekers. He contends that “subjective depictions of asylum seekers exert a particular type of power over these influential actors, which causes them to treat asylum seekers in different ways without forcing them or overtly incentivizing them to do so” (Gill 2009, 187). The representation of asylum-seekers as “transient and fleeing” (187), Gill found, thus negatively impacts the experiences of detainees as well as their detention outcomes.

Hall’s (2010) scholarship highlights the importance of emotion as an analytical tool in the examination of everyday life in a migrant “removal center.” She argues that detainees’ experiences are critically determined by staff dispositions toward them, which are best understood through attention to staff emotions. Hall (2010, 887) explains, “emotions are essentially cognitive in nature, linked to the way in which an acting subject makes sense of the world, and shapes that sense-making process in turn” (cf. Bondi, Davidson, and Smith 2005). To employees, detainees are unknown and potentially dangerous bodies. Employees’ association of migrants with illegality and immorality contribute to a belief that migrants are inherently capable of deception or even violence. Hall remarks on the corresponding manufacture of fear and contempt for officers in a UK
detention center. She writes, “circulating fear ‘slides across’ signified bodies, and sticks to some, making them fearsome” (Hall 2010, 889). Feelings of contempt toward detainees, Hall contends, are a product of employees’ ideas of moral worth juxtaposed with the stamp of illegality on migrant bodies simply by virtue of their detention.

Here, I posit that the master narrative of homeland security manufactures continuity in employees’ “worldview” and corresponding actions despite a diversity of backgrounds and individual influences. I focus on how the conditions of detention together with powerful discourses collectively operate as a process of representation. I pay special attention to the ways in which these factors are embodied by employees in their decisions and interactions with migrants. Though federal detention policy has been implemented unevenly and can vary significantly according to facility (Hernández 2008), personal interactions within the system exhibit identifiable, similar characteristics that can be, I suggest, traced to the hegemony of homeland security discourse in popular imagination. While there are exceptions, employees’ individual decisions and actions often convey a perception of migrants as outsiders and criminals. Detainees are thus seen as threatening, immoral, and untrustworthy. The D & D system further disciplines employee behaviors by distancing and dehumanizing detainees in ways that tend to preclude the formation of relationships with the potential to alter these perceptions.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. By detailing the process of searching for detained migrants from Ecuador, I “periscope in” to the organization of the U.S. D & D system. In the course of these searches, I primarily spoke with people who appeared to be in administrative positions, either working directly for ICE (including ICE
officers in non-field positions) or on behalf of companies or prisons contracted by ICE. My sense is that most of these people rarely interacted directly with detainees. Next, I begin to sketch some of the conditions of detention as described in accounts provided by deportees. These accounts, in contrast to my phone interactions, reference direct interactions between migrants and D & D system personnel, such as ICE officials, facility guards, and facility operations staff. Data illustrate that whether or not detainees interact personally with employees, critical aspects of the system’s operation and conditions are governed by ideas of homeland security. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the productive power of this chaotic geography of detention and deportation.

Ordering the Chaos: Searching for Detained Migrants

On June 29, 2009, a woman named Lucinda came into the Casa del Migrante. A friend in the United States had called to tell her that her husband Rolando, who had been living in Massachusetts for twenty-one years, had just been detained. Lucinda wanted assistance determining where Rolando was, what was happening to him, and if and when he would be deported. The woman did not know her husband’s birth date, and when I explained that it was hard to search without that, she said she would find the information and return. The following is an excerpt from my field notes the following day, June 30.

Wife of Rolando came in again with two of her children. She had a tattered piece of paper with his birth info, and Rolando’s complete name…I called the Massachusetts ICE, and the guy wouldn’t look for him without an A Number [Alien Registration Number,
explained below]. I called ICE Buffalo, and the woman begrudingly searched his name and said he was in [county facility] near Boston, but she wouldn’t give me his A#. I called [county facility], and the woman said he was there and gave me his A#, but said for details on his case I’d have to talk to ICE. I called the automated number for EOIR [Executive Office of Immigration Review—a centralized number for the Immigration Courts] and [by entering the A#] it said he had been ordered removed in Boston in 2003. I called ICE MA back, and the woman I talked to said I’d have to talk to the duty officer, to call back in forty-five minutes. I called back right away and hit another option and that person said to call back in twenty minutes. I called ICE Buffalo and talked to a man who looked up the A# for me, but said he didn’t know how the deportation process works in MA and I’d have to talk to them. I called back to ICE MA, spoke with a man who said that Rolando had a deport order, and they had to get travel documents for him, and if he didn’t have a passport then how long he remains in detention depends on how long getting the documents takes.

I begin with this description of a “search” for a detained migrant for several reasons. First, for someone unfamiliar with the D & D system, much of this excerpt probably makes little sense, and may provoke feelings of confusion and frustration. Such a response is common among family members of detained migrants, magnified by the
fact that most family members do not speak English. Second, the excerpt illustrates the often exasperating, seemingly unnecessary difficulty involved in trying to get information about a detainee, a process which can be facilitated or hindered by individual employees’ particular responses. Third, even without understanding the layout and procedures I attempted to navigate in this search, a sense of unevenness and inconsistency within the detention and deportation system emerges. In short, the excerpt demonstrates the arbitrary nature of the system’s chaos.

The over 33,000 migrants in detention daily are held in approximately 350 facilities around the United States (Detention Watch Network 2010a). Approximately 33 percent of these detainees are in migrant detention centers run by the ICE or private companies. The remaining 67 percent of detained migrants are in county and city jails contracted by ICE to house detained migrants (Yi 2009). Furthermore, though the ICE is the principal orchestrator of migrant detention and deportation, it is not the only one. Migrants can also be in the custody of the Border Patrol, the U.S. Marshalls, or in a facility that is part of the criminal prison system. The sheer volume of detainees together with the multitude of organizations and agencies involved in detention produce the appearance of chaos for family members and others searching for detained migrants. By describing my efforts at the Casa del Migrante to search for detained migrants, I endeavor to make this massive system more comprehensible and visible. I commence by describing the knowledge and strategies necessary to search for a detained migrant. Through consideration of the many variables that determine the degree of information learned, I
then illustrate how the narrative of homeland security converges with the structure of the D & D system to govern the actions and emotions of system employees.

*Periscoping In To the D & D System*

My objectives when “searching” for migrants were to, first, confirm that a migrant was detained and, second, locate the migrant geographically. Third, I aimed to try to answer family members’ questions regarding what was happening to the person by ascertaining details of his or her case, such as any criminal charges, if he or she had upcoming court dates, and a time frame for deportation. What I refer to as “searches,” therefore, entail not just locating a detained migrant, but also following his or her case until release from detention, which was almost always through deportation to Ecuador. With my own laptop computer, I connected to the Casa’s wireless network. Then, I used my Skype account, automatically recharged by my U.S. bank, to make international calls at significantly less expense than what it costs to call from conventional or cell phones. Occasionally, I made Skype calls from my home when, for example, business hours in the United States did not correspond to my hours at the Casa. In several instances, I also communicated with D & D system personnel via email, but most of my attempts at email were unsuccessful.⁶⁸

Searches for migrants illustrate that practices and knowledge sets within the D & D system are uneven and unpredictable, and thus typify the system’s chaotic nature. The periscope metaphor often came into play during searches, which frequently started with

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⁶⁸ Email was very useful, however, for communicating with activist groups or lawyers working at the margins of the D & D system.
just a few pieces of information. I used these pieces like the prisms and mirrors in a periscope, trying to position them at just the right angles to see further into the system.

During my months at the Casa del Migrante, I learned what information was needed from family members, where to call in the United States, and the questions to ask when speaking with immigration personnel. In the excerpt above, Lucinda could provide her husband’s name, birth date, and the state in which he had been detained. This amount of information was common. Family members sometimes had an even more vague idea of where the migrant was apprehended, such as “on the border,” particularly when migrants were caught attempting to enter the United States. Usually, a direct phone call from the detained migrant yielded more detailed information than being informed second- or third-hand (such as through a smuggler, a friend, etc).

If information provided by family members pointed to a specific facility, I began by calling that facility. In most cases, however, the limited degree of information available led me to begin by calling the ICE because it is the principal orchestrator of detention. The place of apprehension (no matter how vague) was typically a good starting point for determining where to call in the ICE. Most ICE offices are set up geographically, to cover specific states or regional areas of responsibility. They are often located in or near migrant detention facilities, and there are more offices concentrated in border areas. Because he had been living in Massachusetts, I began my search for Rolando by calling an ICE office in that state, listed on the DHS website. If a family member knew only that the person had been detained on the border, I tried calling ICE offices in border states.
The names and information of any migrants who have ever had contact with the
DHS are theoretically entered into a computerized system contained within a number of
databases. These databases include migrant data from other branches of the DHS in
addition to ICE, such as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (so those applying
for visas, residence, and citizenship) and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, of
which the Border Patrol is a branch. One officer explained to me that the ICE had
recently expanded from three to five “dockets” because there were so many names they
were becoming unwieldy in just three. Even if a detained migrant is not currently in ICE
custody, a search of the databases may yield information regarding the person’s current
location. For example, ICE may know if a migrant is incarcerated and charged with or
serving a sentence for a crime in county, state, or federal prison.

In the search for Rolando, the “A Number,” or Alien Registration Number, came
up repeatedly. Once I had this number, I was able to call back the places that would not
proceed without it and acquire more information.69 All migrants in DHS’s computerized
system are given an A Number, an eight or nine digit number usually starting with zero.70

69 With an A Number, one can also call an automated 800 line for the Executive Office of Immigration
Review (EOIR), which is the agency of the Department of Justice that adjudicates immigration cases. If a
migrant has or is scheduled to see an immigration judge, then through the EOIR line, one should be able to
access information on court date, decision, place, and time remaining for filing an appeal. However, I
encountered several significant delays between the court date and when the court decision was accessible
via the automated line, as well as court dates that were never reported on EOIR until after they occurred.
Still, EOIR information was often helpful in filling in details of the migrant’s case. For example, the EOIR
line reported that Rolando had been ordered removed in 2003, which suggested that he would probably not
appear in court before being deported. These procedures will be explained more in Chapter Six.

70 When I asked one immigration official if particular arrangements of numbers meant anything, he
explained that in the past, the first three numbers indicated what kind of visa the migrant had, was applying
for, or the circumstances of her contact with immigration officials. For example, “094” was used to indicate
undocumented border crossers. However, he said that those guidelines no longer apply because there are so
many people in the system that they have to recycle A Numbers. He added that soon A Numbers may have
to be ten digits.
Essentially an identification number, once assigned this number stays with the migrant. In the age of computerized biometrics, only a fingerprint is needed to pull up a migrant’s A Number and access everything the DHS has on file about her.\(^{71}\) When family members did have an A Number, searches were likely to be considerably more straightforward than when they did not. Unfortunately, like Rolando’s wife, most relatives who approached the Casa del Migrante did not have this information. Though ICE personnel often informed me that detainees were advised to give their A Numbers to family members when they called, such information transfers rarely occurred among the people with whom I volunteered. This was likely for a variety of reasons, including very short phone calls, migrants not understanding why A Numbers were important, or this advice not actually being conveyed to detained migrants.

An A Number was often the first thing requested of me after I explained that I was trying to locate a detained migrant, and people with whom I spoke frequently insisted that an A Number was necessary to attempt a database search.\(^{72}\) As exemplified in the search for Rolando, however, it is possible to access information in ICE’s computerized system without an A Number. Many people were able to search databases with just a first and last name, and if they found that name they could then use additional information, such as birth date and parents’ names, to confirm identity. The reasons given (when asked) for requiring A Numbers varied widely. Some employees indicated that it

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\(^{71}\) Indeed, information access exceeds the DHS. One high-level immigration official with whom I spoke indicated that he could also access FBI records.

\(^{72}\) Also, many places had automated answering systems requiring one to select the option for the case officer with whom to speak according to the migrant’s A Number.
was “policy,” “the only way to do it” and “you won’t get anything with just a name anyway.” In contrast, some county prison employees did not appear to use or even know the A Numbers for detainees they were housing for ICE, using instead an identification system specific to that facility. Also, some non-ICE facilities are more consistent than others in reporting undocumented migrants in their custody for criminal charges to ICE, leading to frequent gaps in the information available to ICE.

Personnel proficiency in and willingness to navigate databases varies tremendously. Many ICE employees seemed to be trained to search only within specific geographic areas, or even just within the detention facility nearest them. Knowing this, I first called the Massachusetts ICE office to inquire about Rolando in the hopes that someone would at least be able to search state-wide. However, when that did not yield success, I called the ICE office in Buffalo because in the past someone at that office had been willing to do a system-wide search – as they did again (albeit begrudgingly) in this case. Also, though a limited number of ICE officers with whom I spoke efficiently searched multiple databases for a migrant’s name, others indicated that they only had the ability to search one or two. In the process of a complicated search, one officer explained that there are even ways to do “super queries” with “sounds like” for the name, and at the same time enter other qualifying information like country of origin and birth date. This ability, rarely encountered in my searches, makes it possible to get around problems such as a misspelled name – a common error that often leads to a dead end. The officer added that no matter how good one is at searching for a migrant name, “you have to work ahead of people in the field who don’t care how names go in, if it’s gobbledygook” (Research
I suspect that these discrepancies in skill within the ICE had to do with rank, experience, site-specific policy, and training.

The degree of information attained also varies according to what is known by the person with whom one speaks. This may differ with the type of facility. Calls made to an ICE office or ICE-operated detention facility typically yield a higher degree of detail about a detainee’s situation than calls to a privately-contracted detention facility or a county prison housing detainees for ICE. The following is an excerpt from my research journal on May 21, 2009, when I called a private (contract) detention facility: “The woman I talked to was nice, but couldn’t give me any more info. [She said] ‘All we do is house them and feed them…we take them to court when Immigration tells us to. My computer doesn’t have any of that information on there.’” While phone operators and administrative personnel may be able to confirm or deny a migrant’s location, they usually cannot provide additional details. There are, however, county prisons that have a more developed relationship with ICE, such as an ICE office inside the facility, and these facilities may therefore be able to provide additional information.

If a detainee cannot be located by calling specific facilities or in the ICE’s databases, the next steps I took were to try to call the U.S. Marshals and the Border Patrol. The U.S. Marshals, a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice, detains migrants accused of certain crimes, or migrants being held as witnesses. (Migrants I encountered in Marshals’ custody were witnesses to crimes of human smuggling.) The branch of the Marshals known as the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System is also

73 This officer appeared to be of high rank and had considerable experience. He also commented that he had tried to train others how to search in that way, but most people still did not know how.
frequently charged with transporting migrants domestically for intra-system transfers and internationally for deportation. The Border Patrol, part of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, detains apprehended migrants for varying periods of time before shifting custody to the ICE or law enforcement agencies. My experiences calling the Marshals were usually significantly less productive than navigating the ICE system. The Marshals have their own identification system for migrants, different than ICE’s A Number system. Marshals with whom I spoke did not demonstrate an ability or willingness to search beyond a specific geographic area or facility, and they were more likely to refuse to search for a migrant without a Marshals identification number and to insist I could only obtain detainee information through an Ecuadorian consulate. I experienced a similar low level of success in my limited number of calls to the Border Patrol. Border Patrol officers’ ability to search for detainee information appears to be restricted to the office where one calls, so again, one must have detailed information on the location of detention for successful communication with the Border Patrol. As explained to me by an ICE official, while the Marshals’ and Border Patrol’s information can be linked to the ICE, it is not always linked, and not necessarily frequently updated. Interestingly, I interviewed a lawyer in Ecuador who said that he always started with the U.S. Marshals because he had specific contacts in the Marshals with whom he had established a rapport. Clearly, the complexity of the D & D system invites many different approaches for navigating its inherent chaos.

It is also possible that a migrant is actually incarcerated in a criminal prison, accused of or serving a sentence for a crime. As discussed in Chapter Two, the continued
expansion of the category of “aggravated felony” has made increasing numbers of migrants vulnerable for incarceration prior to detention. If calls to the ICE failed to confirm a migrant’s detention, I attempted to find him or her in the criminal prison system. Details provided by family members could point a search in this direction, such as knowing or suspecting that the migrant had been arrested or had a history of arrest. If the family member had an idea of the location of arrest, such as facility name, city, or county, then I was able to look up and call area prisons. There are also online inmate locators available for some prison systems that proved helpful on numerous occasions. Searches for migrants in criminal prisons could also reach a dead-end, as did those through ICE, if migrant names were misspelled. If the family did not know a specific location, then I attempted to call prisons around wherever the migrant was last known to be. Unfortunately, these searches could quickly begin to feel futile.

Occasionally, family members possessed more detailed information than did Rolando’s wife, such as a more specific location (like the city), facility name, or phone number. Generally speaking, more information made a search easier. For example, if the facility name was known, I could look up the phone number on the internet and call to confirm the detainee’s location and perhaps acquire details of the case. Additional information, however, was not always helpful. Due to the practice of frequently transferring detainees (discussed below), the migrant was not necessarily still at the place of detention for which the family had information. On several occasions, the person’s name was incorrectly spelled on the facility roster or in ICE records so that even though the migrant was at the facility called, that fact proved impossible to verify. What’s more,
important details were often lost in translation. For example, several family members knew only that a migrant was detained in “Paiconti”; it took me a while to ascertain that this meant Pike County, Pennsylvania. Also, phone numbers could be recorded incorrectly by family members for a number of reasons, such as poor connections or the omission of area codes.

Of course, obtaining any degree of information depended on actually talking to someone. In my searches, I encountered many busy signals and never-answered rings. Calls frequently ended with recorded messages saying that there was no one available to take the call and to try again later, or that the voice mailbox was full. Often, after being transferred to a particular person (sometimes by selecting an automated option) I was given the opportunity to leave a voicemail. These messages were rarely returned.74

Finally, I encountered several cases in which it eventually emerged that the migrant was not detained at all. Reasons for the migrant’s apparent disappearance to the family in Ecuador varied, such as a protracted migration journey, death en route, or simply a lapse in communication. The ever-present fear of capture for undocumented migrants in the United States makes detention a very imaginable possibility for their family members in Ecuador. Family members’ imagination of D & D will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

74 The low call-back rate may have been due partially to me being in Ecuador. Because I was calling using Skype, I could only leave my Ecuadorian cell phone number, the Casa del Migrante number, and my email. These options were perhaps difficult or impossible to respond to, because of the international call required or reluctance to email. When I was back in the United States and able to leave a domestic phone number, approximately 25 percent of the calls were returned.
This section demonstrates that simply initiating a search for a detained migrant typically requires particular knowledges and skills. One must have a basic understanding of the geography of detention, be familiar with system organization, be persistent, and think creatively about how to obtain information. One must determine the appropriate questions to ask of both family members and system personnel, and then navigate uneven policies, disparate information systems, and varying employee proficiency and cooperation. As a student and a researcher in Ecuador, I could dedicate myself to this navigation. For example, in the excerpt of the search for Rolando, I made eight calls over the course of several hours. I had time to make multiple calls, experience from previous search attempts, and I speak English. I also possessed the necessary resources: a computer, a Skype account that makes international calls significantly less expense than calling from conventional or cell phones, and money to frequently recharge the Skype account. Achieving the sum of these abilities and resources was impossible for most families with whom I worked in Ecuador. For them, then, the D & D system immediately projected impenetrability and chaos.

Narratives and Structures in Determining Search Success

In the excerpt of the search for Rolando, it is apparent that how a search proceeds and the degree of information learned varied tremendously according to location policy.

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75 Indeed, even the Casa del Migrante could not acquire a Skype account because doing so requires some way to pay online (such as PayPal, a debit card, or a credit card). As a municipal agency, the Casa del Migrante has to petition the municipal government for any of these things. As of July 2011, it still had not had success. Likewise, to make international calls from land lines, Casa employees have to obtain special permission from the municipal government’s central administration.
and the assistance of the people with whom one speaks. Often, in fact, the success of searches depends on the people with whom one speaks more than any other factor. While employees must negotiate organizational and site policy in determining what information to share, they are not mindless machines. My phone interactions illustrated that people working within the D & D system are individuals, with their own emotions, opinions, and sympathies, who have good days and bad days just like anyone else. Fundamentally important, too, are their personal positions. Mountz (2010, 56) argues, “Local immigration officers exercise administrative discretion in their work where they not only influence, but are also influenced by, regional social and economic contexts.”

Employees’ scriptings (the ways in which they think about, perceive, and interpret actions) of detainees are critically important. The impressions of employees who have minimal contact with detainees are not formed from personal interactions. Instead, they are molded by policies and pervasive discourses in which migrants are racialized, criminalized, painted as dangerous outsiders, and treated accordingly. They are also shaped by the information contained in written files in which migrants are categorized as, for example, “illegal aliens,” “criminal aliens,” or perhaps “aggravated felons,” terms that are laden with exaggerated meaning regarding a migrant’s criminality (Nevins 2002; Miller 2003a; Coleman 2008). These narratives are embodied by D & D system employees, to critically influence their behavior and emotions.

Most employees were courteous and efficient, and many made great efforts to be helpful. Some acted with compassion. For example, in Chapter Four, I relayed the vignette of family members in Ecuador being given the opportunity to speak directly to
Carlos, who was detained in a county prison. This rare move was the result of a decision made by a sympathetic employee.\textsuperscript{76} There were several extremely helpful ICE employees with whom I communicated multiple times, and who spent significant amounts of time on the phone with me. I wrote this of one phone interaction with an ICE officer: “Some ICE people, he said, will say it’s not their job to look for folks, but he doesn’t mind if he has the time, because he knows it’s stressful for the families” (Research journal, January 22, 2009). On several occasions when I explained that family in Ecuador did not have the A Number and was unlikely to obtain it, the person with whom I spoke acquiesced and searched with just the name. There were employees who seemed frustrated by the limited amount of information they could access or were permitted to share.

In contrast, I spoke, too, with people who were clearly annoyed or frustrated by my requests. As in any type of work, their response could be due to many personal or professional reasons. The operation of the D & D system itself appeared to aggravate some employees. For instance, on one occasion when no one at the Varick Street detention facility in Manhattan answered the phone, I called another ICE office in New York state. I explained to the woman who answered that I was trying to verify if an Ecuadorian migrant was in Varick Street but could get no response. She replied that she had taken numerous calls because people at Varick Street were not doing their job, so now “I have to do mine plus theirs.” On another occasion, at the suggestion of an ICE officer I called a county prison where a migrant was detained. The following excerpt from my research journal on July 21, 2010 describes that call:

\textsuperscript{76}Such a decision was probably possible only in a county prison small enough that people answering the phones had easy access to detainees.
I called [] County Prison and talked to someone in Records who
was absolutely livid - angry that someone in ICE had told me to
call there. “We only give them beds, we have no information on
them. If someone in INS is telling you to call us, they are just
pushing you off. Who told you to call me? I really want to know!”

Exchanges such as these indicate tense relationships among the various components of
the D & D system. They also illustrate that despite the tremendous power over
information that immigration personnel have, they often feel frustrated and powerless
themselves (Mountz 2010). These emotions influence their responses to search requests.

The success of a search also depends on rules regarding who may receive
information about a detainee and individual decisions determining how much information
is made available. If the official was willing and able to do a search, then she could
usually confirm the migrant’s location. Additional information proved more difficult to
obtain. For example, people taking inquiries sometimes insisted that they could only give
information to the detainee’s attorney, and most detainees do not have an attorney. Others
stated that only the detainee could give out information regarding his or her case, when,
of course, the family members’ and migrant’s mutual inability to communicate was
exactly why the official was being contacted. (What’s more, frustrated detainees often
called family members in Ecuador asking them to try to obtain more information about
their own case.) Employees also occasionally insisted that they could only release
information about detained migrants to an Ecuadorian consulate. Ecuadorian consulates
do not necessarily know when Ecuadorians are detained, because no agreement exists
with the U.S. government that they be informed (such agreements do exist with some countries). In fact, Ecuadorian consulates typically learn about the detention of their citizens when a family member calls, or when the ICE contacts them to request travel documents.77

The ways in which immigration personnel interacted with me during a call also varied significantly. When initiating a call, I usually explained that I was a volunteer for the Casa del Migrante in Cuenca, Ecuador, calling on behalf of a detained Ecuadorian’s family in Ecuador. Such information did not seem to matter to some people with whom I spoke or influence the way in which they proceeded with the call. Others asked for clarification, appeared curious, or seemed suspicious. On several occasions, people specifically asked if I was a lawyer, apparently to determine how much information to give. My reply that I was not a lawyer sometimes facilitated access to information, while at other times this response seemed to preclude access.

The influence of the negative scriptings of migrants on employee responses was clearly illustrated in numerous phone interactions. For example, many D & D system employees were not willing to put much time into searches, perhaps restricting their efforts to one last name and first name combination (when it is possible to search by various combinations of both first names and last names).78 While such responses may be attributed to limited time or lack of knowledge regarding how to conduct more thorough

77 While I never attempted this, it may have been possible to get an Ecuadorian consulate to follow up on the calls that I had made and ask for the information to be released to them; I believed it faster to try to “call around” the individual who gave me that response.

78 According to Spanish language conventions, complete names usually include two first names and two last names.
searches, I suggest that these responses were also governed by a deep-seated distrust of migrants. For example, people from whom I requested information often stated that migrants “usually lie” about their names and other information, so it would probably be impossible to find them. This perception may be based on previous experience, but it is also conditioned by dominant tropes regarding the immorality and dishonesty of migrants.

Employees’ responses reveal varied success of narratives that “other” and hierarchize immigrant ideas of family and home. Employees with whom I spoke stated with some frequency that details beyond confirmation of the fact of detention could only be shared with detainees’ family members. This posed a challenge since I made most calls when family members were not present, because searches (and updating information as cases progressed) typically entailed many phone calls spanning days. On several occasions, the official relented when I explained why the family member could not talk, such as living far away or only speaking Spanish. In several instances when I received the latter reply and the employee confirmed that she spoke Spanish, I was able to pass the headset to the family member and the official spoke directly with her. One time, after speaking a few minutes the family member passed the headset back to me at the official’s request; the official said the family member did not appear to understand her explanation, so she then explained the detainee’s case to me so that I could help the family member understand. This incident demonstrates two things. First, even when speaking directly with ICE personnel, family members may struggle to comprehend the D & D system. Second, when ICE personnel comprehend how difficult it is for family members to
understand a detainee’s situation, they do often have the flexibility to act with compassion. In contrast, by minimizing the desire of family members to obtain information, some employee responses further hint at a comparatively negative impression of Ecuadorian home and family. For example, employees often told me that detainees could easily call family members in Ecuador via a collect call if they wanted to. Therefore, they reasoned, if relatives did not know the A Number it was because the detainee did not wish them to know. In this response, employees reveal both a lack of compassion and the devaluation of family members’ desire for more information.

The conceptualization of migrants as threats to safety and homeland security surfaced in numerous conversations. For example, I recorded the following account of trying to acquire information regarding a migrant’s scheduled deportation date (Research journal, June 25, 2009):

The woman I talked to then did confirm that Patricia is there, but would give me no information about when she was coming. I asked if I was able to get her parents here, would she be able to give more information to them. She said no, that information is “confidential for the safety of the officer.” I said, “ICE officers?” and she said “the officers who travel with them.” I said, “Like, their safety on the plane?” And she said, “well, whatever scenario you can imagine, there are many possible reasons.” I tried to push more, saying can you at least tell me if she’ll come in July? August? And she wouldn’t say more.
Though some personnel did not hesitate to give a specific date, others refused. If asked why, some people replied that it was policy. Responses such as the one above, however, insinuated that such information would put people at risk, and they indicate a perception on behalf of the employee that detainees are threatening bodies that need to be contained.\textsuperscript{79}

Another important influence on the success of searches is the way in which the sheer volume of migrants being moved through the system dehumanizes them in the imaginations of D & D personnel. Dehumanization is already central to public discourse regarding immigrants (Heyman 1995; Golash-Boza 2009a). Then, the operation of detention and deportation reinforces this dehumanization when employees in the system feel like they are herding migrants through an interminable process. In one instance when I called a detention facility, the employee with whom I spoke said she could not give me additional information, and directed me to call another facility, because “they have the body over there” (Research journal, June 20, 2009). In the course of explaining that her facility did not hold migrants overnight, another staff member said, “we ship them, send them out to smaller centers, and then depending on where they are is where their cases are managed” (Research journal, July 1, 2009). Such communications illustrate how, to system employees, migrants are reduced to A Numbers moving through the system, a “body” without a personal story and a future to be housed, fed, and “shipped” as a farmer regards livestock, or a businessperson regards a product. Employees become anesthetized by the never-ending volume of detainees, as one officer’s attempt at levity illustrates. I

\textsuperscript{79} Several times ICE officers indicated that A Numbers were confidential in order to protect the detainee.
wrote, “[He said ‘The system is so slow today. But really, it’s going through millions of names.’ He looked for and found two different [women named] Mercedes for me, and joked, ‘I guess the Mercedes like to get caught!’” (Research journal, January 22, 2009). These phone interactions exemplify how the expansive, chaotic D & D system objectifies and homogenizes detainees in the minds of system personnel.

This section has described the process of searching for detained migrants in order to begin to order the chaos perceived by family members in Ecuador. The perception of chaos this system projects, then, stems from gaps in the information received by family members as well as the unpredictability of access. The latter factor is partially the result of inconsistent policies and practices among the many entities and actors involved in detention. The ICE is nominally in control, but the often disparate practices of different member agencies and facilities result in a general lack of coordination in policies. This unpredictability, as I have demonstrated, is also critically shaped by the ways in which particular scriptings of migrants shape feelings of insecurity on the part of system employees. These feelings influence employees’ emotions and behaviors in ways that discipline their responses. Consequently, significant irregularity exists in the knowledge required to acquire information about detainees as well as the knowledge that is actually attainable.

The Scripting of Migrants in Conditions of Detention

Through examination of the steps required to search for detained migrants, the previous section discussed governance of the actions and emotions of D & D system
employees who largely do not come into direct contact with detainees. In this section, I focus on those employees who do, such as ICE and Border Patrol officers, facility guards, and facility operations staff. As I explore situations and spaces in which interactions between employees and migrants occur, I also begin to identify conditions characteristic of detention. While further description of these conditions is provided in Chapter Six, the discussion here illustrates that even personal interactions are governed by both the structure of the system and assumptions embedded in the master narrative of homeland security. Together, I contend, these factors critically shape the perceptions and behaviors of employees, and, therefore, the conditions experienced by detained migrants. As Hall (2010, 883) argues, “The detention centre is the space where the anxieties surrounding mobility become crystallized and where the distinctions between citizen and other must be sustained in the minutiae of everyday life.”

**Homeland Security and the “Minutiae” of Detention**

As perpetual outsiders, migrants are viewed as unfamiliar, and as illegal bodies they are inherently capable of wrongdoing. Hall (2010) observed that to officers at a UK detention center, not knowing detainees’ history and background, or the verity of a detainee’s story, was profoundly unsettling. She argues (2010, 890):

> The anticipatory logic manifests itself as a general hypervigilance, an enhanced awareness of bodies in time and space, and the persistent interpretation of behaviour within a particular ‘scopic regime’ of signification that privileges suspicion. It is through this
hypervigilance – generated by a concern not to lose ‘the initiative’
– that detainees may be transformed from unknown, unruly and
risky bodies into known, manageable ones.

As the embodiment of criminality, any migrant could pose a problem. Consequently, all
are regarded with suspicion of being dangerous, and all are managed accordingly (Dow
2004; Hall 2010). In the U.S. D & D system, for example, migrants are routinely
shackled for any kind of mobility, such as in transfers or for court appointments. As
Fernando said, “For everything, they cuff us feet, hands, and waist. They treat us like
criminals.” Every aspect of detainees’ daily routines and spaces are subject to
surveillance. Many facilities have video cameras in all rooms, and there are frequent cell
checks and head counts. For example, Elsa recalled, “Frequently they came by, starting in
the early morning, [and said] ‘Count!’ And you have to stand up so that they can count
you.” Ana Lucía was upset because guards did not let her close stall doors when using the
bathroom. Many interviewees indicated that they were constantly under suspicion of
wanting to escape. Rodrigo remarked that one facility was particularly nice because there
were windows and you could look outside. “Except,” he added, “if you looked for too
long, the guards got mad and said you were thinking about escaping.”

Following Hall’s (2010, 886) assertion that, “emotions are responses to the
perception of value,” interactions have the potential to convey an unfavorable assessment
of detainees’ worth on the part of employees. Interviewee Carlos reported that guards
only let detainees watch TV channels in English: “They said to us that we were stupid,
that why would we come here if we don’t know English.” Interactions can also exhibit
the perception that migrants “get what they deserve” for their illegal presence in the United States. For example, Fernando reported that after the car he was in flipped over during the Border Patrol’s effort to stop it, his eye was bloody and clearly injured. He recalled, “We were taken first to Migration, even though some of us were obviously hurt. Migration didn’t pay attention to our injuries, saying ‘It’s your fault you’re hurt.’” Such responses illustrate a devaluation of detainees’ needs in comparison to employees’ own.

The ways in which detainees are scripted together with the structure of the D & D system also dehumanizes and objectifies detainees in employees’ eyes in numerous ways. Upon detention, detainees’ bodies are visibly marked as criminal. They must surrender personal clothing and don facility uniforms, and they are identified by numbers instead of names. Jorge described the bracelet stamped with his A Number, name, date of capture, home country and a miniature photograph: “[It was] a plastic strip attached with two little metal pieces, very secure, you can’t take it off, it can only be cut off with scissors.” Thus, many aspects of migrants’ appearance that express their individuality and personhood are removed, and the migrant becomes one body among many others. The common dearth in translation services may mean that personnel cannot communicate clearly with detainees, further marking them as unknowable and different. In addition, the lens of suspicion through which employees view migrants produces a sense of not only difference but also danger. Hall (2010, 891) argues that in the detention center where she conducted research, “the officers’ hypervigilance creates distance from the men in their care and control, and etches (and re-etches) the difference between citizens and others. The detainees become bodies in time and space, objects to be tracked and scrutinised, surfaces
which emotions inscribe, and to which are attached certain traits (trouble, compliant, disruptive). The detainee as person falls away.”

The high degree of mobility forced on detainees further dehumanizes and distances them. Migrants detained in the United States are routinely transferred between facilities multiple times (Human Rights Watch 2009; National Immigrant Justice Center 2010). The average number of facilities through which my interviewees passed was 3.4, while some were detained in as many as eight facilities. The effect of this mobility from the perspective of detainees will be discussed in Chapter Six, but here I emphasize the disciplinary impact of this mobility for system employees. As Gill (2009) found in the United Kingdom system, the frequent transfers of detained migrants undermine relationships in detention and negatively impacts employees’ potential willingness to help. He (2009, 195) writes, “The moral sensibilities of the manager cause him to respond to the mobility of detainees by reducing the level of support offered.” Even if detainees (most of them asylum seekers in Gill’s research) have a moving story, employees become numb to the relentless succession of crises. For these employees, as with the administrative personnel having little to no contact, detainees become dangerous, dehumanized, morally inferior bodies to be “shipped out.”

The detention system is structured in such a way that anyone with power over detainees can become a petty sovereign (Butler 2004). Guards, in particular, have the power to intervene in and control the spaces and mobilities of detainees through exercising discretion regarding how policies are enacted and rules are enforced. Their position allows them to intimately control the everyday realities of detention. As deportee
Tulio put it, “they have you in, as they say in chess in check, they have you in check all the time.” They may control, for example, the time allotted to consume a meal, the activities in which detainees partake, and access to information. José Carlos explained how inmates’ success or failure in communicating outside the facility could depend on individual guards’ attitudes, “It is up to [guards], if they feel like it they let you call but if they don’t, no. There were a couple who were good, if you wanted to call you asked and they let you. On the other hand when you told others you wanted to call, they said no, no, no, go away and don’t bother me, it isn’t allowed.” The unpredictability in detainee-employee interactions indicated in José Carlos’s account becomes part of migrants’ detention experiences.

Personnel have the power to make decisions leading to the neglect of detainees’ basic corporeal needs. For example, deportees frequently recounted a persistent disregard of their routine medical care, and a failure to respond to medical situations until they became urgent. Carlos stated,

People can die [in detention]. There was a guy suffering from seizures, three months he was having seizures. They came and saw him, didn’t do anything, they saw him a second time, the third time, because they thought it was more serious because the guy had started to bite his tongue until it bled. Only then did they take him to the doctor, because they saw it was a serious thing.

Such responses suggest an ingrained culture among system employees of disbelieving detainees and doubting their credibility. Physical conditions of detention also reflect the
common dehumanization of migrants on the part of personnel. Detainees often suffered from hunger due to both insufficient and inedible food. Manuel, who went from 220 to 175 pounds over the course of three months of detention, said, “It is a jail, and of course they cannot serve food made to order. But the food caused trauma!” Deportees complained of burned and spoiled food. Tommy explained, “they gave us food, but like you would give to a dog…No one liked it but from hunger one had to eat, even rotten, bad food. Some [people] got sick.” Interviewees described unhygienic conditions, such as filthy bathrooms, unwashed bedding and clothes, and not being allowed to bathe for extended periods. Interviewee Carlos, for example, was upset by the condition of his blankets. “They would not wash the blankets for us…I was there three months and they never let me wash them. I went to leave them in the laundry, but they said no, that the chief has said that those can’t be washed … Sometimes that caused allergies, imagine the dirt that they collect in three months!” Many deportees reported being held in uncomfortably cold rooms without sufficient clothing at some point during their detention. Tulio recounted, “Something that is really hard…twenty-four hours a day it is like being in a restaurant freezer. It’s something that is unbearable, and the majority of people get sick.” These accounts from my data corroborate the findings of recent scholarly work, reports by human rights organizations, and investigative journalism pieces, which will be discussed further in Chapter Six (see, for example, Welch 2002; Dow 2004; Nguyen 2005; Barry 2009a; Bernstein 2010a, 2010b; Golash-Boza 2010; ACLU 2011; Wood 2011).
It is important to note that the behavior and emotions of D & D system employees as reflected in interactions with detainees did not reflect uniform discipline. For example, interviewees’ mentions of memorably helpful individuals illustrate that the potential does exist for more compassionate, personal relationships. Daniela, for example, recalled the person who facilitated her deportation,

I said to her, “please, help me, I can’t stay in here anymore, I am desperate, I am getting so many headaches and they already took me to the medical department,” ... So she said to me, “Dear, I am going to help you, give me your name, all your information” … Right away she sent things, and [then] told me, “your papers arrived, and I am going to facilitate things so that you leave this very week.”

Julio said that he was grateful to the ICE officer who took his intake information; Julio initially stated that he was Mexican, and the officer, suspecting otherwise, informed Julio that not being truthful could significantly increase the time he spent detained. Julio decided to amend his nationality, and later realized how much time the officer’s intervention likely saved him. A particularly poignant example is found in the actions of another ICE officer. After detainee Patricia called Ecuador from a Texas detention facility, very upset and saying that she felt threatened by other inmates, her family asked me if there was any way to make sure that she was okay. I called the facility, and to my surprise, I was able to speak with Patricia’s deportation officer. Then, the woman made arrangements to meet with Patricia alone, away from other inmates in case their presence
would prevent her from speaking openly. While such action was not ultimately taken, the officer said that it would be possible to move Patricia to another facility if necessary to protect her safety.

Across the spectrum of interviewee experiences, however, these anecdotes appear as exceptions. Despite the “radical potential to disrupt” (Hall 2010, 894) of emotions such as empathy and compassion, the master narrative of homeland security together with the architecture of the detention and deportation apparatus coalesce in employees’ worldviews to effectively erase the structural reasons for migration and undermine the development of positive relationships. Indeed, the detention process itself naturalizes “illegality” in ways that seem to lend credence to the poor conditions of migrant detention (Hernández 2008). It thus becomes intuitive for people with whom detainees interact to see them as nameless, suspect, and dangerous bodies. Employees’ feelings of fear, suspicion, and blame may ease doubts and pangs of conscience that they may have regarding conditions to which they see detainees subjected (Hall 2010). After all, they may reason, such conditions are justified by migrants’ presumed guilt and immorality. As deportee Pato stated, “In detention, I was nobody, just like everyone else. They treated me like a criminal, when all I ever did was work. With them, a dog is treated better than a migrant.”

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the chaotic geography of the U.S. migrant detention and deportation system’s organization. The operation of the system is shown to
be highly unpredictable, confusing, and disordered in ways that project the appearance of 
chaos for detainees’ family members in Ecuador. The information available regarding a 
detained migrant varies according to inconsistent policies throughout the system and 
uneven knowledges held by both relatives and detention system employees. What’s more, 
often the degree of success in searching for a detained migrant is highly dependent on the 
people with whom one speaks, and ways in which their actions – including subjective 
decisions – have been disciplined.

Arguments about the social control functions embedded in immigration 
enforcement bureaucracies are not new. What I contribute to these arguments is attention 
to the dynamic nexus of the master narrative of homeland security with the D & D 
system’s organization. It is at this nexus, I suggest, that employees experience a 
heightened sense of insecurity which influences their emotions and behavior concerning 
detainees. My methodological approach to understanding policy enactment (the strategy 
of periscoping grounded in embodiment) highlights that there is a reflexive relationship 
between the chaotic geographies of detention and how immigration personnel script 
migrants. As Hall (2010, 894, emphasis in original) writes, “It is clear that detention is a 
productive strategy, which brings forth categories of illegality and undesirability as it 
seeks to contain them.”

The responses of D & D system employees also illustrate additional ways in 
which chaos can be productive. Despite and because of the disorder produced by the 
rapidly growing system, employees’ responses collectively provide a space for the 
repetitive performance of migrants as outsiders. As employees negotiate a never-ending
stream of detained migrants, detention and deportation become routine practices, normalized to the degree that they become banal (Sidaway 2003; Bigo 2007; Haldrup, Koefoed and Simonsen 2008; Gill 2009). As Hall (2010, 894) contends, “staff at the grassroots matter because the task falls to them to make meaningful (in mundane daily routines) the cultural, social and political distinctions between citizen and other that the UK immigration and detention system seeks to draw.” Likewise, the actions of United States’ D & D system employees can be understood as daily performances of nation-building (Heyman 1995; Mountz 2003, 2010; Hall 2010). As products of a sense of insecurity, employees’ perceptions of and behaviors toward migrants work recursively to reinforce discourses of homeland security, including the paradoxically central role of the othered migrant as a metric for determining belonging.
CHAPTER SIX

“You don’t even know where you are”:

Mapping Migrants’ Experiences of Detention and Deportation

Introduction

This chapter examines how the U.S. D & D system produces insecurity for detained migrants. The reality that detainees experience insecurity is far from surprising given that migrant as other is at the heart of the master narrative of homeland security propelling the expansion of the system. In Chapter Two, I explained how the D & D system draws on and reinforces the construction of racialized immigrants as illegal, thus operating as a form of “postentry regulation” (Coleman 2008) and contributing to the production of a cheap, flexible labor force. As illustrated in Chapter Five, the structure and operation of the D & D system together with the powerful discourses of security work as a disciplinary apparatus to reinforce non-immigrants’ scripting of immigrants as dangerous bodies that must be carefully managed. Detention and deportation thus produce the migrant as both laborer and other against which the homeland is defined. This chapter’s exploration of the ways in which detainees embody insecurity illustrates the power of the D & D system to conceal both central elements of its operation and alternatives to deportation through its chaotic material and ontological geographies.

Scholars have begun to identify ways in which practices of incarceration and exclusion strategically use space to manage immigration. Bloch and Schuster (2005) identify detention, deportation, and dispersal as largely symbolic tactics employed in the
United Kingdom to control migrant bodies. Collyer (2007) and Hyndman and Mountz (2008) detail emerging strategies of “externalization” that numerous European countries are implementing to prevent asylum seekers from ever entering their territory and being able to make an asylum claim. Mountz (2004, 2010) discusses the Canadian government’s “long tunnel thesis,” showing how “detached geographies of detention” limit refugee claimants’ receipt of support for their cases. Similarly, Martin (forthcoming) has shown how, to the U.S. DHS, difficulty of access is a positive trait when selecting detention sites. Mountz (forthcoming, 8) also illustrates how “[g]eography is used to deny access to rights” by identifying multiple ways through which detention spatially isolates detainees.

Here, I build on this work by visually and descriptively mapping elements of detention and deportation that are central to detainees’ experiences of chaos. I focus on migrants’ procedural trajectories through the system, their sense of isolation through the blocking of communication and information, and disorienting temporal and spatial aspects of detention. This act of mapping demonstrates that for detainees, the system’s chaotic geographies operate to block access to potential support networks and ensure deportation. These mappings also show how the appearance of chaos projected by the system works to hide the driving influence of the immigration industrial complex and the poor conditions of detention. The chaotic geographies of detention and deportation, then, are shown to have their own “peculiar structural advantages” (Weizman 2007, 8).

An additional objective of this chapter is to contribute to knowledge regarding the experiences of detainees. Hernández (2008, 37) states that immigrant detention is “often
invisible as a transitional space between apprehension and deportation.” As a rule, detention facilities tightly control access to detainees, and after their expulsion deportees are beyond the reach of most activists and scholars. Thanks to recent NGO reports, investigative journalism, and scholarly research (cited throughout this chapter), information is growing regarding the often problematic conditions of detention. To this, I contribute empirical data gathered in a country of migrant origin from populations rarely considered in existing work: deported migrants and migrants’ family members. My analysis highlights the importance of space and time in the shaping of detainees’ experiences. In addition, my periscopic methodological approach serves to emphasize the systemic nature of problems suffered by detained migrants. That is, due to the way in which data was collected, poor conditions generally cannot be traced to a specific facility. This fact prevents the dismissal of problems by claiming that they are linked to a particular location.

The chapter is organized as follows. First, I explore and explain the potential complexities of detainees’ apprehension to deportation trajectories. Next, I discuss how detainees are isolated through a sustained deficit of information in combination with profound challenges communicating outside places of detention. Then, I literally and figuratively map detainees’ spatial and temporal experiences of detention by focusing on the ICE’s practice of frequently transferring detained migrants. Through these various mappings, it becomes clear that chaos functions to isolate and disorient detained migrants in ways that obscure any outcomes except deportation. The final empirical section of the chapter explores how these chaotic geographies also work to conceal critical drivers of
and flaws within the D & D system. I conclude by discussing how the chaos thus provides another site for the reinforcement of the master narrative of homeland security.

**Procedural Chaos Between Apprehension and Deportation**

As an entry point to this section, I begin with a story of four Ecuadorians originally from the small town of Santa Luisa\(^\text{80}\) outside of Cuenca. In March 2009, Remigio, Gabriel, Victor, and Iván drove together from where they lived in Danbury, Connecticut, to Pennsylvania to take advantage of Pennsylvania law allowing one to register and acquire plates for a car with a foreign driver’s license. On their way back to Connecticut, they were pulled over by local police near Scranton for, according to Remigio, “looking *moreno* (brown-skinned).” Unable to produce acceptable documentation, within an hour they were in Pike County Correctional Facility in Lords Valley, Pennsylvania, a prison that detains migrants for ICE in addition to criminal prisoners. Family members of two of the four men came into the Casa del Migrante (independent of each other) soon after their capture with inquiries regarding their whereabouts and situation. Consequently, I followed the four cases and interviewed Iván and Remigio after their deportation to Ecuador.

Trying to make the legal and procedural process through which detainees must pass between apprehension and deportation more understandable for family members seeking assistance at the Casa del Migrante, we explained it as a series of three steps. First, the migrant is ordered deported. Second, he must obtain the required travel

\(^{80}\) This is not the real name of the town.
documents. Third, he waits for a seat on a plane to Ecuador. Regardless of different legal categorizations and distinct timelines, the trajectories of all four Santa Luisans generally follow these steps.

Remigio was deported to Ecuador after six weeks. He had been caught four and a half years earlier crossing the U.S.-Mexico border and released from custody with a pending court date. When he did not appear in court, he was ordered removed in absentia. When Remigio was caught in Pennsylvania, the pending removal order was re-instated and he was put directly into deportation proceedings. Gabriel and Victor arrived in Ecuador approximately two and three months, respectively, after capture. Neither of these men had been apprehended before, and both of them were granted Voluntary Departure (explained below). Gabriel subsequently secured the required documents and plane ticket and returned to Ecuador in mid-May. Victor, however, did not obtain the necessary documents, lost Voluntary Departure, and then received a regular removal order, adding an additional month to his detention time. Iván was detained for four and a half months before deportation. Like Remigio, Iván had been caught at the U.S.-Mexico border in his first migration attempt in 2005. Unlike Remigio, however, Iván had actually been deported. His second migration attempt six months later was successful, and he lived in Connecticut for four years until his capture in Pennsylvania. The ICE office housed in Pike County Correctional Facility opted to charge Iván with the aggravated felony charge of Illegal Reentry, punishable with three to twenty years in jail. After three months, the state Attorney General dropped the case and Iván was ordered removed again, and then scheduled for a flight in late June. Iván was then caught in an AH1N1 (swine flu)
quarantine at one detention facility, missed his flight, and waited an additional five weeks for another flight.

Like the description at the beginning of Chapter Five of the search I conducted for Rolando, this account of four different experiences and timelines – despite the identical circumstance of capture – may leave the reader with a sense of confusion. Indeed, even the two Santa Luisans I interviewed said that they had achieved only a vague idea regarding where they were in the procedural trajectory. For example, Iván did not know that he was being charged with Illegal Reentry until several weeks after we knew at the Casa del Migrante, and he did not know that he had been in a quarantine until I told him when he was back in Ecuador. To bring some order to detainees’ apprehension to deportation trajectories, I draw on information learned during my searches for migrants as well as detailed explanations of immigration law to further explain what each step entails. I demonstrate that despite the myriad permutations within the three steps, detainees’ trajectories usually share a definitive end point: deportation. After explaining what is involved in the steps, I pay special attention to the ways in which detainees are subjected to “undue processes” (Hernández 2008, 48) that work to rigidly maintain them on the path to expulsion.

*Step One – Receiving a Removal Order*

The first step in migrants’ apprehension to deportation trajectories is typically the most complex and longest in duration. It entails, in the terminology of the DHS, receiving a “removal order.” It bears noting that this surgical language immediately conceals the
violence that has occurred through the interruption of the migrant’s life. The detention of
a migrant signifies, for example, a sudden halt to a migrant’s mobility or the abrupt
severing of his or her familial, social, and professional relationships. This violence is, in
itself, often profoundly disorienting to the person being “removed.”

As illustrated through the story of the Santa Luisan men, orders of removal are
arrived at through a range of legal procedures. A basic removal order is issued by an
immigration judge in the branch of the Justice Department known as the Executive Office
of Immigration Review (EOIR), after determining that the migrant is “removable.” (In
nearly all of the cases on which I worked, the migrant was deemed as such.) Basic
removal orders carry with them a reentry ban of five to twenty years, depending on the
individual’s migration and criminal history. A ban means that for the specified time
period, the migrant is ineligible to receive a U.S. visa. 81 Removal orders do not
necessarily entail a court appearance by the migrant. For example, Remigio received a
removal order in absentia when he did not appear at his scheduled court appearance in
2005. In the case of a “stipulated removal order,” a migrant is presented with the order by
an immigration official. With the migrant’s signature, he agrees to removal and cedes the
right to see a judge (Koh 2008). An “expedited removal order” does not require the
migrant’s signature. As discussed in Chapter Two, this classification has been
continuously expanded to include more categories of migrants since it was introduced in
1996. Today, immigration officials can apply expedited removal to migrants apprehended
within one hundred miles of all land borders and coastal areas.

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81 Bans are usually meaningless to undocumented migrants, particularly those who entered the United
States without a visa in the first place.
After receiving an order of removal, a migrant has a limited period of time in which he can file for “discretionary relief” from removal. There are four possible forms of relief. “Voluntary Departure,” which both Gabriel and Victor were granted, is one form. The word “voluntary” is somewhat of a misnomer because the migrant still must leave the country. A migrant with Voluntary Departure has to arrange for his own travel documents and purchase his own plane ticket within specific location and date guidelines. He usually remains detained until the flight. In theory, Voluntary Departure is preferable to a removal order because it does not carry with it a reentry ban. In practice, however, the chances of a visa actually being granted to someone who left under Voluntary Departure are remote. A successful applicant for Asylum, the second form of relief, must demonstrate “well-founded fear” of returning to her country of origin. I encountered several cases of Ecuadorians seeking asylum due to, for example, domestic abuse or fear of retaliation from smugglers or debt-holders. Requirements for the third form, Cancellation of Removal, vary according to whether the migrant is a lawful permanent resident or non-permanent resident (FindLaw 2010). The migrant must prove that she has been in the United States continuously for five years (lawful permanent resident) or ten years (non-permanent resident). The non-permanent resident must also prove that she is of “good moral character” and that her removal would cause tremendous hardship to U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident family members. With the fourth form, Adjustment of Status, a temporary resident asks to be made a legal permanent resident, based on family, employment, or humanitarian reasons (FindLaw 2010).
The time required to pass through Step One varies greatly, depending on factors such as the volume of migrants being processed at a particular location, what kind of removal order the migrant receives, if a migrant is waiting to see an immigration judge, and how quickly paperwork is processed. Time spent in this step can be influenced by numerous other factors completely outside the migrants’ control. For example, three women on whose cases I worked were held for extended periods of time to serve as witnesses in trials against human smugglers, including Ana Lucía, who was detained for five and a half months before being deported, four of those due to a pending smuggling trial. Finally, prior to passing into ICE custody and arriving at the first step, some migrants may be inserted into the criminal punishment system before passing into ICE custody and beginning deportation proceedings.

**Step Two – Obtaining Travel Documents**

After a migrant is ordered removed, the Detention and Removal Office (DRO), a branch within the ICE, must obtain the paperwork necessary to deport her, including confirmation of nationality and permission to travel. In the majority of cases on which I worked, Ecuadorians did not have sufficient proof of citizenship, such as a valid passport. In this case, the DRO has to work with the migrant’s origin country consulate.

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82 Two of the cases had to do with the same smuggler. None of the women actually testified, as the cases were all settled before trial. Their ‘service’ as witnesses had no favorable bearing on their removal decisions.

83 If a migrant initiated a clandestine trip to the United States with an Ecuadorian passport, she likely discarded it or a smuggler took it en route so that the migrant could claim nationality from another country if caught (see next footnote). Also, several migrants who did have an Ecuadorian passport at their home in
to verify nationality based on personal information given by the migrant. Delays occur if the information sent to a consulate is incorrect. Errors such as a misspelled name or incorrect birth date occur with frequency when an ICE officer is recording the information of an apprehended migrant. The officer may not be familiar with Spanish spelling, and the migrant may not check how his or her name is recorded. Also, the detainee may have given false information regarding, for example, name or country of origin. However they come about, such errors can delay the migrant’s eventual deportation by weeks or even months. For example, one interviewee, Franklin, reported that he was detained for almost four months because his name had been misspelled by the intake officer.

Another factor prolonging Ecuadorians’ detention appears to be the speed of processing on the part of Ecuadorian consulates. I repeatedly heard comments in my conversations with ICE personnel that they were just waiting on paperwork from the Ecuadorian consulate, and that Ecuadorian consulates seem to take longer than those of other countries. Data from interviews with deportees supported these comments. For instance, Santiago was told by an ICE officer that the Ecuadorian consulate does not work quickly ("no se mueve") and because of that Ecuadorians were detained longer than people from other countries. This deficiency on the part of the consulates, according to

the United States did not want to contact other occupants (if they were undocumented) to ask them to send the passport for fear of putting them at risk.

Smugglers frequently coach Ecuadorian migrants to give false names and claim that they are from Mexico or Guatemala, in hope that they will be deported to a country closer to the U.S.-Mexico border, and thus be poised to more easily make another border-crossing attempt. However, while successful in the past, with the recent shift to mandatory detention of Other Than Mexicans and identification verification before deportation, this ruse rarely works.
Ecuadorian government employees with whom I spoke, was due to a lack of resources
(primarily as a result of insufficient funding) to address the increasing numbers of
Ecuadorian deportees.

*Step Three – Waiting for a Flight*

Once the DRO has the necessary paperwork for the migrant, then he or she must
wait for a deportation flight. Migrants are deported on either JPATS or commercial
flights. JPATS, the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System, is operated by the
U.S. Marshals.\(^{85}\) JPATS flights to Ecuador generally (though not always) leave from
states along the U.S.-Mexico border, recently typically from Louisiana. Most migrants
caught near the border are deported to Ecuador by JPATS. If Ecuadorians are caught in
the U.S. interior, they may be transferred to JPATS departure locations for deportation, or
they are placed on commercial flights to Ecuador.

Migrants can reach this final step and still have to wait for weeks or even months,
for a variety of reasons. JPATS typically flies one plane of deportees to Guayaquil,
Ecuador, every two or three weeks, on a Friday. If there is a backlog of Ecuadorians
waiting for a flight, then a migrant must wait through the departures of numerous flights
to Ecuador. In two cases at the Casa del Migrante, Ecuadorians waited so long for a
JPATS flight that their paperwork expired, and the DRO had to re-apply for the travel
permission – essentially sending them back to step two. Also, while I was in Ecuador,

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\(^{85}\) As of July 2011, JPATS’ website proudly claims it is the largest prisoner transport system in the world.
there were numerous cases like those of Iván, whose unlucky inclusion in a quarantine resulted in additional detention time.

“Undue” Processes

Despite the non-criminal history of the majority of detained migrants, immigration law actually entitles them to fewer due process rights than those charged with mainstream crimes (Miller 2003a; Chacón 2007; Kanstroom 2007a; Hernández 2008). As pointed out in Chapter Two’s discussion of the exceptionalism of immigration law, this discrepancy has to do with the legal view of detention and deportation as administrative procedures instead of as punitive measures (Hernández 2008; Coleman 2009; Golash-Boza 2010). The treatment of immigrants as criminals (or worse than criminals) corresponds to the racialized processes of criminalization at the heart of the logic of homeland security. What’s more, employees within the D & D system are disciplined to see migrants with potentially legitimate rights claims as logistical problems (Heyman 1995; cf. Dow 2004). Consequently, immigrant detainees are subject to, as Hernández (2008, 48) puts it, “undue processes,” which work to rigidly maintain them on the path to deportation.

Immigration prisoners have no constitutional right to legal representation, so they must arrange and pay for any representation they receive (Hernández 2008). Most migrants in removal proceedings, therefore, go unrepresented; barely 10 percent of

86 The classification of migrant detention as part of an administrative process also technically avoids adherence to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which guards against the imprisonment of people who do not stand accused of a crime, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that people seeking asylum should not be punished (Golash-Boza 2010).
detainees have representation in court (Miller 2003a; 2003b, 215). This reality significantly decreases their chances for a positive case outcome (TRAC 2006b; National Immigrant Justice Center 2010; ACLU 2011). As interviewee Patricio concluded, “if you don’t have a lawyer you can’t do anything in there.” Also, poor representation in the criminal prison system may have devastating outcomes for cases in immigration courts. For example, several Ecuadorians relayed that they were advised to plead guilty to the crime of which they were accused, even though innocent, to expedite release from criminal jail. Such pleas essentially ensure a removal decision once in immigration court and preclude applying for relief.

Certain conditions of detention also negate or make a mockery of the due process rights that detainees do supposedly have. A lack of translation services, for instance, often prevents non-English speakers from accessing services that are available (Miller 2003a). In certain situations, detained migrants have the right to be released on bail while awaiting a court date, but this right is often negated by the imposition of excessive bail amounts (Martin forthcoming). Fernando’s bail, for instance, was set at $25,000, which was well beyond the amount he or his family could have paid.

As explained in Chapter Two, the increasingly common designation of a migrant as an aggravated felon immediately strips her or him of basic due process rights. The category is designed to make previously minor acts, such as shoplifting, trespassing, and public intoxication, deportable offenses. Aggravated felonies also include acts that are a part of daily life for undocumented immigrants, such as perjury (e.g. lying about immigration status), forgery (including of driver’s licenses and social security cards), and
reentry after deportation (Miller 2003a; TRAC 2006a; Kanstroom 2007a). The category has been made limitlessly retroactive, meaning that immigrants are now vulnerable for deportation due to convictions years earlier, even for crimes that at the time they were committed were not considered aggravated felonies. Because their removal is considered an administrative procedure, “aggravated felons” typically do not have the right to present their case before an immigration judge, and almost all possibilities for judicial discretion have been eliminated (Miller 2003a; TRAC 2006a; Kanstroom 2007a).

Other mechanisms through which migrants are stripped of the right to present their case before an immigration court are equally problematic. Migrants can receive expedited removal orders administratively by immigration officials if they are caught within one hundred miles of any border. This means that people apprehended in their community in a coastal city such as New York are often given expedited removal without seeing a judge, even if the time they have lived in the United States meets the residency threshold theoretically sufficient to avoid expedited removal. The conditions under which detainees’ signatures are obtained on stipulated orders are also troubling. Detained migrants usually have no access to legal counsel prior to signing. Thirteen of the forty Ecuadorian deportees I interviewed indicated that they signed the orders because they did not realize what they were signing or were pressured to sign. Some of these Ecuadorians may have been able to present legitimate reasons to a judge for avoiding deportation (Koh 2008). Often, the documents are not translated from English. Manuel said that “they made me sign things that I wouldn’t have signed if I had known [what they were].” Detainees’ signatures are also obtained by threat and bullying (Coutin 2010a). Armando
related that “in the first detention place they made me sign papers. I told them that I didn’t want to sign, that I wanted to see a lawyer. They told me that I didn’t have the right to anything.” Tommy recalled, “They told me that we aren’t going to send you to a judge so [just] sign your deportation [papers]…they said to me that if you don’t sign your deportation we are going to throw you in jail, throw you in jail for five years.” Javier’s experience suggests that detainees’ signatures are sometimes extracted through deception; an ICE officer said “if we signed a paper renouncing all of our rights…to see a judge, to a lawyer, to bail…that they would get us out quickly, in a week, but nothing of what he said was true, they had us there much longer than that.”

The possibilities of and procedures for filing for discretionary relief from removal – essentially, a migrant’s last chance to avoid deportation – are fraught with difficulties (Human Rights Watch 2009; National Immigrant Justice Center 2010; ACLU 2011). Filing an application requires appearance before a judge, so migrants with stipulated or expedited removal orders usually cannot apply, regardless of the potential legitimacy of claims (including claims for asylum). By definition, aggravated felons are ineligible to apply for relief from removal. Also, migrants can be deemed ineligible for all forms of relief if they have any sort of criminal history, have missed any court appearance (whether to do with the current request for relief or in the past), or do not meet specified time limits for filing for the kind of relief sought. Furthermore, because of the ways in which the definitions of deportable crimes have shifted in recent years, even lawful permanent residents can be deemed ineligible for relief because of, for example, a DWI from decades earlier (Miller 2003a; Coleman 2007b). Then, the legal processes required
for relief applications can span months or even years, and migrants are often detained throughout this time (Human Rights Watch 2009; ACLU 2011).

Such lengthy detention periods influence migrants’ decisions regarding whether or not to seek relief from removal (ACLU 2011). This is exemplified in the case of Sergio, who had lived undocumented in the United States for eight years and had a U.S. citizen wife and child. Though Sergio met the requirements for Adjustment of Status and also had a private lawyer paid by his employer, after twenty-eight weeks in detention he decided to give up his appeal because the process would have meant at least another year in detention. David’s decision to not apply for asylum provides another example. David’s experience of kidnapping and torture en route to the United States made him eligible to apply for asylum. I communicated with a paralegal working for the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project in Arizona who met with David. On June 16, 2009, she emailed: “Although he said that initially he would like to fight his case, he is concerned by the amount of time it would take and the economic toll it would take on his family. This appears to be the main reason he intends to take a deportation order.” Similarly, Saira, who applied for asylum based on claims of domestic abuse in Ecuador, said that after being detained three months she gave up, “I couldn’t stand to be there any more time, locked up...there I was sick all the time, sometimes I could eat and sometimes I couldn’t eat, and I couldn’t stand to be shut in anymore, so I signed my deportation.”

The subjective decisions of D & D system employees are another critical factor shaping migrants’ procedural trajectories. In Iván’s case, for instance, a Pennsylvania ICE officer opted to charge him with Illegal Reentry. When I spoke with the officer, he
presented the charge as an automatic course of action: “He’s already been deported, so we’re charging him with Reentry” (Research journal, April 2, 2009). In other instances I encountered of repeat entry after deportation, by contrast, the migrant’s previous removal order was simply re-instated. The Pennsylvania officer’s decision essentially delayed Iván’s deportation at least two months, and it potentially could have led to years of incarceration for Iván. A way in which subjective decisions can seriously influence case outcomes are also evident in determinations of aggravated felony (TRAC 2006a). Other examples are ICE officers’ decisions to pay attention to or ignore detained migrants’ requests to claim asylum, or to allow migrants to present evidence that they have been in the United States at least two years in order to avoid expedited removal.

The ways in which the immigration court system (the EOIR, housed in the Department of Justice) operates are also effective in ensuring migrants’ deportation. As of June 2011, Immigration Court backlogs for pending cases were at an all-time high: the average wait time was 482 days (TRAC 2011). While this backlog is due partly to the ICE’s persistent goal of raising deportation numbers (Preston 2011), it also stems from a failure to keep the courts adequately staffed (TRAC 2010, 2011). There are fifty-three Immigration Courts in the U.S. Department of Justice, which are supposed to be staffed with over two hundred Immigration Judges. As of January 2010, one in six positions was vacant (TRAC 2010). Due to mandatory detention laws, those migrants who are waiting to see a judge face extended detention times (ACLU 2011). Indeed, in recent years, the Departments of Homeland Security and of Justice have orchestrated legal changes to make longer detention durations possible to accommodate wait time (Hernández 2008).
Migrants who attempt to fight removal orders face far longer detention times than those waiting to receive a basic removal order.

Court backlogs also negatively influence migrants’ chances to a fair hearing once they do appear in court. For example, judges are pressured to handle more cases with fewer resources at a faster pace (Becker and Cabrera 2009). Migrants appear in large groups before immigration judges, enter pleas in a chorus of voices, and are sentenced as groups (Gambino 2010; Wessler 2010) Often, they are not provided with translation services, and little effort is made to ensure that they understand the charges against them and consequences of their plea (Fernandes 2007; Gambino 2010). In some detention facilities, migrants’ or judges’ appearances in court occur long distance, by videoconferencing (Fernandes 2007). In addition, jaded and overworked judges are more likely to make decisions guided by personal opinion. (TRAC 2006b; Hernandez 2010).

Given these ways in which the immigration courts operate, at the Casa del Migrante I often saw it as an advantage when a migrant did not see a judge because her detention was typically shorter. Indeed, a migrant’s “right” to present her case in court often turns into a fruitless extension of detention duration (Hernández 2008). It is important to remember, however, that the factors proscribing an appearance in court and the conditions migrants often face once in court are intensely problematic.

**Isolation Through Control of Communication and Information**

Detainees’ experiences are also shaped by rigid control over information and communication, which can create a profound sense of isolation. The majority of the
deportees I interviewed said that they did not receive sufficient information about what was happening to them during their detention. Most detained migrants simply desired information regarding if and when they would be deported. In this section, I discuss how the structure and operation of the system effectively impose an information void for detained migrants (American Friends Service Committee 2010; National Immigrant Justice Center 2010; ACLU 2011).

Individual employees, conditioned by negative scripting of migrants, can pivotally influence the degree of isolation felt by detainees. Particular employees may be positioned to act as gatekeepers. Guards exert a significant degree of control over detainees’ access to information. José Carlos, for instance, reported that guards decided which migrants were given the opportunity to speak with ICE officials when they visited, and if the guards did not deem a particular detainee’s request valid then he was not granted a meeting. Carlos recounted, “Sometimes you put your name down to talk to a counselor to ask something, but were never called … It was because of the guards because they made up the list.” Migrants’ experiences were uneven, varying according to facility. For example, in one facility Ana Lucía had no idea what was happening with her case. In a different place to which she was transferred, however, ICE officials came every Tuesday and Thursday to answer questions. Deportees also expressed frustration regarding the accuracy of information they were given. Carlos complained that he would receive one answer from a particular ICE official, but then another would supply a different answer. Furthermore, many interviewees indicated that they were not provided with (and could not access) contact information that would allow them to obtain more
information by communicating beyond facility walls, such as for consulates and pro bono lawyers.

The often insurmountable challenges of communicating to people outside detention facilities further compound detainees’ sense of isolation (Human Rights Watch 2009; National Immigrant Justice Center 2010; ACLU 2011; Martin forthcoming). Javier explained that while detained, “I lost contact with my family, I lost contact with everyone. That is, from the moment that Migration took me, I lost contact with, with everyone, and from there I couldn’t make calls or tell anyone where they could find me.” Any cell phones are removed from the migrants upon detention.

Migrants are technically entitled to a free domestic phone call upon arrival at a new place of detention. The experiences of several interviewees show that this call is not always granted. Paúl reported that, “When I was in [], the official gave me a call, but I talked for only a minute, and no one answered the phone, but he marked it down on the paper as taken, so I never got a call.” In addition, the free call typically does not include international calls, complicating efforts to communicate with family members outside of the United States. What’s more, the majority of detainees are held for extended periods of time, and that one free call (if granted) falls far short of their communication needs. Due to most facilities’ policies, it is almost impossible for family members to call a detainee. While many ICE personnel informed me that detainees could make collect calls, the fact that few interviewees mentioned such a possibility suggests that they are not informed of it. Also, most phones in Ecuador are not set up to receive collect calls. Consequently, direct communication between a detainee and outsiders depends on the detainee initiating
and being able to pay for a call. Deportees also indicated that often there were not enough phones available to meet detainee demand, so one had to wait a long time to make a call, calls had to be short, or they were dependent on a pecking order established by guards to access phones (Welch 2002; Dow 2004; ACLU 2011). For example, Oscar reported that in one detention facility there was one phone for over twenty people; there was always a line, and you were not allowed to make multiple calls.

Then, the purchase of phone time is typically plagued with difficulties. First, as mentioned in Chapter Two, call rates are grossly inflated by the private calling companies usually contracted to run detention centers’ phone systems (Fernandes 2007; ACLU 2011). Second, the process for obtaining a calling card may be challenging. In some facilities, for example, detainees have to make purchase requests for cards that take days to fill. Third, if a migrant is not detained with money on her person, then her ability to buy a calling card depends on receiving money from family or friends (which can be a complicated process in itself) or earning money by working in the detention facility (discussed below). Paid at a rate of one dollar per day, a detainee must work for at least two weeks to be able to pay for one short international call.

The fact that detainees are under constant surveillance also truncates their ability to communicate with family members. Detainees may fear that calls to undocumented family or friends could put them in danger. Many interviewees were informed that calls

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87 One interviewee said that if you did not have money to make a call, you could fill out a request for a free call. If this policy was applied beyond the place in which this particular migrant was detained, the fact that he was the only interviewee aware of such an option illustrates that it was usually not made known to detainees.
would be recorded, and others suspected or feared that would be the case. Some interviewees recalled that before making a call they had to state whom they were calling, their relationship to them, and record the phone number. Tulio explained that all his family members in the United States were without papers, and he believed that immigration officials wanted him to call in order to obtain information about them. He said, “Migration asks you where your family lives, they know that I have grandchildren there…[they asked] where do they live? Give me their phone number, call them. You can never [call], and what’s more all calls are intercepted, they are checked by the police and by Immigration, so you can never [call], and so I never communicated with anyone there.”

While communication by mail is possible, it is complicated and time-consuming. Frequent detainee transfers mean that a letter may arrive after the migrant has been moved from the facility. Additionally, deportees reported that any letters they sent or received were opened by facility personnel. Finally, I never encountered a detention facility where detainees were allowed internet access.

The isolation imposed on detainees by controlling information and communication further complicates migrants’ efforts to exercise the rights technically available to them. Often, detainees are not informed of rights that they do have or provided with information necessary to pursue possible alternatives to deportation (Miller 2003a; National Immigrant Justice Center 2010; ACLU 2011). For example, many detainees are not informed of options for applying for relief from removal that may be open to them. The difficulty of communicating outside the detention center also
negatively influences case outcomes. Pato, for instance, attempted to fight his deportation but found it extremely difficult to obtain the documents necessary to support his relief application, such as recommendation letters. In fact, Pato thought he was still in the process of appealing until the moment he was deported. He remarked that, “You can’t do anything there locked up.”

**Space and Time Geographies of Detention Paths**

In this section, I focus on the centrality of space and time in the chaotic structures of detention and deportation. Migrants detained in the U.S. D & D system experience a high degree of forced mobility (Welch 2002; Fernandes 2007; Hernández 2008; Human Rights Watch 2009; TRAC 2009; ACLU 2011). A recent report (TRAC 2009) notes that as of 2008, the numbers of transfers that take place per year exceed the number of detainees. Over 50 percent of detainees are transferred at least one time, and one in every four detainees is transferred multiple times (TRAC 2009). Detainees are also detained for unpredictable and often extended periods of time, particularly if they are attempting to fight deportation (Welch 2002; Dow 2004; Fernandes 2007; American Friends Service Committee 2010; ACLU 2011). While ICE states that migrants spend an average of thirty days in detention, investigative reports indicate that this number is actually significantly higher (American Friends Service Committee 2010; ACLU 2011).

In my interviews with deportees, I asked them to name in order the places where they had been detained, and for how long they were detained. Frequent mobility was certainly experienced by many of the forty deportees I interviewed, for whom the average
number of transfers was 3.4. Ten were detained in more than four places. One interviewee was transferred eight times. Detention durations for my interviewees ranged from two and a half to twenty-eight weeks. From this data, I constructed six maps to visually represent detainees’ transfer paths, which provide a starting point for further discussion of the chaotic time-space geographies of migrant detention.  

The first three maps illustrate the paths of migrants transferred four times. Figure 1 shows the transfer path of Eduardo (Figures 1 to 6 are at the end of this chapter). After his capture near the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona, Eduardo was detained in four different facilities over the course of eight weeks. Eduardo’s transfers were relatively straightforward, keeping him generally in the border states and moving him closer to the Louisiana facility from which many interviewees’ JPATS flights departed. The transfer history of Remigio, one of the four Santa Luisan men discussed above, is also fairly uncomplicated (Figure 2). In a period of six weeks, Remigio passed through three facilities in the state of Pennsylvania, and then he was moved to Louisiana for a JPATS flight. While Hugo was also detained in four places, the map of his transfers shows a more geographically inefficient route (Figure 3). During his six weeks in detention Hugo was moved inland from Manhattan to Pennsylvania, then flown west two-thirds of the way across the country to New Mexico, then back east to Louisiana for deportation.

The second three maps depict the paths of migrants detained in more than four places, which was the experience of one quarter of my interviewees. Marcelo’s path, shown in Figure 4, illustrates the geographical absurdity inherent to many transfers.

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88 Cartography is by Joseph Stoll, Syracuse University Department of Geography.
Detained in a total of six places over twelve weeks, Marcelo zigzagged and looped through space before finally being deported. He was first detained in New Jersey, and transferred to Manhattan and then to York, Pennsylvania. Next, he was moved to Raymondville, Texas, then to Laredo, Texas, and then to Louisiana from where he was deported. Some patterns of forced mobility were so complicated as to make mapping them a challenge. Oscar, for example (Figure 5), was transferred seven times over the course of ten weeks, and one of the transfers moved him back to a facility where he had been previously. He was first detained in Queens, New York, then moved to Manhattan, and then to Freehold, New Jersey. His fourth transfer brought him back to Manhattan before being moved to York, Pennsylvania, then to El Paso, Texas, and finally to Laredo. Diego, like numerous other interviewees, did not know the names or locations of several facilities through which he passed (Figure 6).\textsuperscript{89} Diego was detained for twelve weeks and transferred eight times. He was first held in Manhattan, then moved to a facility somewhere in New Jersey, then another place he could not name in Pennsylvania, and then to York, Pennsylvania. Next, he was transferred to San Antonio, Texas, then Raymondville, then to a facility in New Mexico of which he did not know the name or location. Diego was then transferred to Louisiana and from there deported. I now draw on these maps as well as data from other interviews with deportees to bring order to the forced mobility within the D & D system.

\textsuperscript{89} The fact that some interviewees did not know specific facility names or locations required creative mapping techniques. In order to represent the unknown points on this map, I chose points representing known sites of detention.
**Deciphering Transfer Patterns**

Some of these transfer geographies follow a comprehensible calculus. For instance, five of the six final transfers illustrated in the maps were to Louisiana, from where deportation flights often depart. Some facilities, such as those in Manhattan and York, Pennsylvania, are hubs through which most migrants in a particular region will pass. Interestingly, where migrants are initially apprehended appears to loosely correspond with the number of places in which they are then detained. Migrants caught near the border usually pass through the lowest number of facilities, while the greatest number roughly correlates with initial detention in the interior.\(^90\) This disparity makes some sense when one considers typical apprehension to deportation trajectories. Migrants caught on the border trying to enter the United States are more likely to receive expedited or stipulated removal orders, and they are already close to common departure points of JPATS flights. In contrast, those caught in the U.S. interior, like Marcelo, Oscar, and Diego, are far from the U.S.-Mexico border and are more likely to have complicated, time-consuming procedural trajectories. Likewise, the shortest detention periods were most likely to be similar to that of Julio César, detained for a total of two and a half weeks in two places. He was apprehended near the U.S.-Mexico border, had no previous entry attempts on record, and received the necessary paperwork in time for the first available deportation flight to Ecuador. The longest detention periods were usually those of migrants fighting a removal decision. This was the case for Saira, who was detained for sixteen weeks, and for Sergio, detained for twenty-eight weeks.

\(^{90}\) The “interior” means far from land borders crossed to enter the United States without a visa. As shown in the maps, for Ecuadorians the “interior” often references the east coast, due to historic settlement patterns.
Still, the time and space geographies of migrants’ detention paths often do not adhere to discernible formulas. For example, despite the fact that Eduardo’s (Figure 1) situation was similar to that of Julio César’s, he was detained for significantly longer (eight weeks) and experienced two more transfers. Movements did not necessarily bring a migrant closer to a departure point for flights, such as Diego’s (Figure 6) transfer from Raymondville to New Mexico before being transferred to and deported from Louisiana. Martín was transferred from Massachusetts to Puerto Rico, and then back to the continental United States before deportation to Ecuador. Others paths show migrants being shuffled back and forth between the same facilities or geographically proximate facilities, as was Oscar’s (Figure 5) experience. While Franklin was in the same place for all sixteen weeks of his detention, Clemente passed through five detention places in just four weeks.

These often baffling movements through space and time can be partially attributed to a mismatch of available facilities with places of capture. A 2009 report by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University (TRAC 2009) states,

As the number of detainees has grown, the agency – at least until recently – has not sought to balance where it located new detention beds with where the individuals were apprehended. Instead ICE has adopted a free-wheeling transfer policy to deal with the resulting imbalances. Under this policy, ICE transports detainees
from their point of initial ICE detention to many different locations
– often over long distances and frequently to remote locations.

A lack of planning and coordination within the D & D system is therefore a contributor to the high number of transfers.

Some transfers are plainly orchestrated to curtail migrants’ rights (Morawetz 2005; Human Rights Watch 2009). As Martin (forthcoming, 24) writes, “Transferring detainees between facilities allows ICE to manipulate ‘due process,’ exploiting the U.S. Federal Court’s uneven legal geography to attain its desired legal outcomes.” For example, Kanstroom (2007b) reported that immigrants apprehended during a 2007 raid in New Bedford, Massachusetts, were quickly transferred to detention facilities in Texas before they could inform family members and meet with lawyers. What’s more, the rate of transfer to court districts known to be hostile to detainees’ claims are notably higher than to those that are not (Morawetz 2005; Human Rights Watch 2009). Migrants are also frequently transferred to places where no pro bono lawyers are available (Fernandes 2007; Human Rights Watch 2010; ACLU 2011). Furthermore, mobility can be used to discipline and control detainees (Gill 2009). For example, detainees have been transferred in response to protests regarding treatment and facility conditions (Bernstein 2010b), and known organizers have been moved to preempt continued organizing (Dow 2004).

**Consequences of Detainee Transfers**

Whether due to poor planning or design, these patterns of forced mobility profoundly shape migrants’ experiences in the D & D system. Transfers are profoundly
detrimental to case outcomes (Morawetz 2005; Human Rights Watch 2009; National Immigrant Justice Center 2010; ACLU 2011). For migrants detained while living in the U.S. interior, transfers usually move them away from their home area, thereby truncating access to familial and legal support networks that could assist efforts to avoid removal (National Immigrant Justice Center 2010; ACLU 2011). Transfers interfere with established lawyer-client relationships, problematize detainees’ right to select their own counsel, and change the set of laws applied to particular cases (Human Rights Watch 2009). Additionally, many detention facilities are located in remote, hard to access areas far from urban areas (Human Rights Watch 2009; National Immigrant Justice Center 2010; ACLU 2011). In fact, as already mentioned, to the DHS, difficulty of access is a positive trait to be sought when selecting detention sites (Martin forthcoming; cf. Mountz 2010 on Canada). Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Five, Gill (2009) found that in the United Kingdom, frequent transfers have a disciplinary effect on both facility managers and support groups poised to assist asylum seekers, effectively discouraging them from actually providing assistance. Moran, Piacentini, and Pallot (manuscript under review) argues that circuitous and disorienting transportation routes work to establish the power of the carceral system over prisoners in Russia. In the U.S. detention system, too, transfers make the involvement of assistance entities difficult and undermine the development of relationships with facility personnel in ways that further limit the assistance available to them.

Transfers also contribute to detainees’ isolation by further complicating migrants’ communication efforts. Migrants, family members, and others in support networks often
scramble to locate and re-establish communication after a transfer. Adding to this challenge is the fact that calling cards are specific to the facility in which they are purchased, which means that if a detainee is suddenly transferred the card becomes useless. José Carlos explained,

> I had money, but the problem was that sometimes it took four or five days for them to give you the card. You fill out a request for the card and it comes after five days. They came to give me the card and that same day that the card arrived, that day they transferred me and that card was only good there, in the other one it was no good.

Many interviewees reported that their account money arrived at their new location weeks after they did. Until that money arrived they could not purchase a calling card and were thus unable to inform people of their new location.

Many deportees complained about the physical conditions they experienced during transfers (Human Rights Watch 2009; ACLU 2011). Detainees were routinely chained for transfers. While some interviewees were mildly perturbed by this practice, it was traumatizing for others. Oscar remarked, “I want to forget that. One of the worst things in my life.” Transfers typically entail lengthy processes for checking migrants out of one facility and into another. When large numbers of migrants arrive at the same time, detainees may have to wait for extended periods, still in chains. Tulio reported forty hours in cuffs during one transfer, and noted that personnel checking in new arrivals took leisurely breaks. Interviewees also told of waiting in crowded rooms without sufficient
places to lie or sit, being provided with little food, and having to wait in exceedingly cold
rooms. Julio recalled one miserable transfer experience: “Because we arrived at 8 p.m. it
was too late to check us in, so we had to spend the night in a very cold room without
food. Here I really suffered for the cold. It was a cement floor we had to sleep on with no
beds or blankets.” What’s more, there were numerous reports of failures to transfer
money and possessions along with the migrants. While it is unclear whether actual
corruption is involved or the system simply fails to keep up with the volume of transfers,
what is clear is that occasionally possessions and money are never returned to migrants,
who have no recourse for their recuperation.

Additionally, many people find the mobility between facilities disorienting and
upsetting (Gill 2009; Human Rights Watch 2009; ACLU 2011). Within the D & D
system, transfers are treated as guarded secrets. In its 2009 report, TRAC notes how its
own efforts to compile information were complicated by ICE’s and contracted facilities’
reluctance and refusal to share even basic data regarding transfers. As already explained,
some interviewees did not know names or locations of the facilities through which they
passed. Most interviewees reported little to no advance notice regarding when a transfer
was to occur, to where, or why. Many reported being awoken during the night and made
to leave immediately. Remigio recounted, “They just arrive at your cell saying ‘you are
going, get your things’ and nothing else. They don’t tell you ahead of time or don’t let
you call your family to let them know you are going to be transferred, none of that.” José
Carlos explained how guards sustained a sense of secrecy throughout detainee
movements: “They always moved me chained. They take you in a van…and they enter [detention facilities] by tunnels … you don’t even know where you are.”

What’s more, transfers contribute to extended detention durations (ACLU 2011). Transfers can further complicate and temporally extend the procedural trajectory, as pieces of information are lost, and paperwork trails (such as for travel documents) are re-routed. On numerous occasions, a migrant’s file arrived weeks after she did, meanwhile precluding advancement in her procedural trajectory. A new set of personnel must become familiar enough with the migrant’s case to take the appropriate procedural steps. In this milieu, different facilities have different procedures and backlogs. This is exemplified in the case of two brothers traveling together, Andrés and Juan, who were both captured by ICE on the Texas border and detained in the Willacy Detention Center in Harlingen, Texas. Juan was transferred to the South Texas Detention Center in San Antonio, due to, as explained to me by an ICE official, lack of bed space in Harlingen. This move led to a much longer detention time for Juan; Andrés returned to Ecuador after three weeks, while Juan returned almost two months later. This example also points to ways in which chance and unpredictability are woven into the fabric of the D & D system.

The cumulative architecture of the D & D system makes detained migrants feel like they are in a purgatory of waiting. As José Carlos stated, “Being locked up there you get desperate, because there was no way to communicate with anyone or know when you are going to be sent, nothing.” Daniela, detained a total of two months, watched as a group of four Ecuadorians came in after her and stayed only three weeks; she was
depressed and frustrated when she could get no explanation for her longer wait time from officials. Carlos also described feeling desperate when he could not obtain information, and said: “you suffocate because you don’t know when they are going to get you out.” In these accounts, we see how turbulent the D & D system can feel for those caught within it, or how they experience what Welch (2002, 109) calls the “Kafkaesque nature of detention.”

Because of this turbulence, detention often has the effect of making detainees feel like their deportation is inevitable (Martin forthcoming; Coutin 2010a). Indeed, despite and because of these conditions, most detainees eventually – unavoidably – become deportees.

I conclude this section by recalling the vignette at the beginning of Chapter One describing migrants’ experiences of deportation and pairing it with data from interviewees. Detained migrants often received little or no advance notice of when they were to be deported. It was common to be awoken in the night, herded into a room with dozens of others, and held there for hours with no place to lie or sit. Interviewees who arrived via JPATS (as opposed to commercial flights) typically received minimal food and were shackled hands, feet, and waist. Guards on the flights yelled, made threats, and did not allow migrants to talk or go to the bathroom. Then, deportees’ arrivals in Ecuador were often punctuated with numerous material dilemmas. Migrants disembarked in Quito or Guayaquil with exactly what they were wearing when apprehended weeks or months earlier. They often found themselves inadequately clothed for return to their

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91 This references a 1937 play by Franz Kafka that tells the story of a man trying to defend himself without knowing the charges and evidence against him or how long his imprisonment and trial will last.

92 Of my forty interviewees, thirty-one were deported on JPATS flights.
origin community in a highland climate. Furthermore, deportees frequently arrived with no money and without having been able to contact family members. While the Ecuadorian federal government now provides a bus to transport deportees who arrive with JPATS to the Azuay and Cañar region, interviewees who arrived on commercial flights told stories of begging and borrowing money to call family members or pay for public transportation. This last episode of mobility represented a final embodiment of the D & D system, effectively branding deportees with one more experience of disorientation and degradation.

Concealing Power, Profit, and Abuse

As discussed in Chapter Two, detained migrants are viewed as “raw materials” by the immigration industrial complex (Welch 2002, 166). This perception is exemplified in deportee Jorge’s recollection:

When we were about to get off the airplane, one of the [guards] said to us, ‘Well, boys, so long and don’t come back,’ and the boss who was there – they speak in English because a lot of the people don’t understand so they think that no one understands, but I understood what they were saying – ‘so long and don’t come back,’ and the boss said, ‘don’t tell them that…if they don’t come back, we won’t have work.’

In this final empirical section, I contend that the disorder and confusion that characterize the D & D system effectively hide the influence of the companies and individuals who
profit, the ways in which they profit, and the abuses, waste, and inefficiencies that subsequently arise.

The capitalist drive for financial gain plays a central role in the management of facilities (Fernandes 2007). The average daily cost to the government for detaining a migrant is $122 (Detention Watch Network 2010a). As mentioned in the previous chapter, detainees typically experience poor conditions including inadequate food, substandard medical care, and unsanitary facilities (American Friends Service Committee 2010; Bernstein 2010a, 2010b; ACLU 2011). Interviewees also described tight control over facility-issued items such as clothing, toiletries, and bedding, findings that correspond to recent investigative reports (Barry 2009a; American Friends Service Committee 2010; Bernstein 2010b; ACLU 2011). As argued in the previous chapter, some of these conditions have to do with the reinforcement of hierarchy and the othering of migrants. They also, however, have to do with reducing costs. By minimizing the amount of money that is spent in providing for detainees, detention providers increase their profits. Largely due to the successful lobbying of detention contractors, there are few standards in place regarding the conditions of migrant detention (Fernandes 2007; Flynn and Cannon 2009). In fact, ICE has never terminated a contract for violation of existing guidelines (Hernández 2008).

The generation of profits also plays into the chaotic space-time geographies experienced by detainees. The fact that a detention center makes money for every day it houses a migrant contributes to extended detention stays because managers may not be motivated to facilitate a detainee’s departure. That per day fee also influences migrants’
circuitous transfer paths, as different players wrangle to fill “beds” (Dow 2004; Barry 2010; Cervantes-Gausch 2010; Wood 2011). Thus, while multiple transfers and illogical routes occur due to a lack of planning and central coordination within the D & D system, they also symbolize the power and influence of the immigration industrial complex.

The commodification of migrant bodies extends beyond the “per head” daily payments for housing detainees. The D & D system has nurtured the development of economies internal to detention facilities (Wood 2011). The conditions of detention create detainee demand for particular purchases. As discussed above, detained migrants’ communication outside detention centers is largely controlled by private phone contractors who charge exorbitant rates. Oscar referred to the calling system as a “mafia.”

While outside facilities one can call between Ecuador and the United States for as low as nine cents per minute, deportees reported rates ranging from $5 to $30 for five minutes. In addition, detention centers usually sell food and other items to detainees at inflated prices. Carlos asserted that the facility where he was detained for nearly three months charged triple what items normally cost, but the quality and quantity of the food provided drove him to spend $400 to supplement it. Saira explained that she had to purchase items like shampoo and toothpaste because the quantities issued were insufficient. Clemente reported that if you wanted to do anything other than watch television you had to purchase games, like cards or dominoes. Julio, who used the little money that he had with him when detained for phone calls, explained, “those of us who were in jail there without money are those who suffer the most.”

At the same time as money is extracted directly from detainees, they labor within
the facility for absurdly low wages. Some detention facilities cut costs by “employing” detainees for tasks such as cleaning, food preparation, and laundry (Wood 2011). According to DHS guidelines, no immigrant detainee can receive more than $1 per day for labor performed (Fernandes 2007). Therefore, facilities pay very little for labor that otherwise would earn at least the minimum wage. Despite the demeaning wage, many detainees were grateful, even desperate, for the opportunity to earn small amounts of money. Though José Carlos first laughed when speaking of the pay rate and said, “What can you even do with one dollar!” he continued, “But there, there when you are in need, when you do not even have money for a water, then one dollar is useful.” Many deportees indicated that they wanted to work in order to purchase calling cards or extra food. Indeed, some interviewees indicated that there was not enough work to satisfy detainee demand. Thus, an internal economy is crafted that operates cyclically. The poor conditions of detention create demand for certain goods, which makes migrants willing to work for next to nothing, and then they return the little that they earn back to the facility economy via the purchase of goods.

In conclusion, detainees’ experiences are buttressed by the profit generated from the fact of their detention and from the internal economies of detention centers themselves. The chaotic geographies of the system hide the degrading and disorienting experiences of detained migrants, as well as the irony of being incarcerated for the “crime” of working in the United States and then being forced to work for a pittance in detention. These geographies also cloak the system’s wasteful and inefficient operation.
Therefore, the influence of the immigration industrial complex is protected and the system’s continued expansion is secured.

**Conclusion**

The chaotic geographies of detainees’ experiences are created by the aggregation of complicated and obscured legal procedures, physical and perceived isolation, and disorientation in space and time. This apparent chaos shows that the U.S. migrant detention and deportation system is not a cohesive machine, and it lacks central coordination and oversight. The mappings undertaken in this chapter also illustrate that the system’s structure creates unpredictability and confusion in ways that have important consequences for detainees, nearly guaranteeing their eventual deportation. Additionally, I have argued that the disorder produced works to conceal the powerful capitalist forces driving detention expansion, as well as the waste, inefficiency, and abuse of detainees characteristic of the resulting detention apparatus.

Embedded in the architecture of this chaos is the powerful master narrative of homeland security. This narrative obscures the racist nature of the D & D system and the ways in which it produces a flexible labor pool. By scripting migrants as dangerous criminals whose bodies and mobilities must be tightly managed, the narrative also soothes feelings of discomfort non-immigrants may feel with migrants’ experiences of detention and deportation. The chaos of the system thus works recursively with these discourses of security to produce the migrant as other and construct the homeland.
As discussed in Chapter Two, policymakers state that a primary objective of detention and deportation is deterrence. It follows, then, that policymakers anticipate that the system will work to broadcast, via deported migrant bodies, a transnational message of non-welcome and work as an extra-border control mechanism. In the next chapter, I explore how this message is received. I argue that while the D & D system certainly generates insecurity and chaos in Ecuador, it also results in consequences that are unexpected and even contradictory to stated policy objectives. Therefore, I will show that also hidden within these chaotic geographies are the shortcomings of the deterrence paradigm.
FIGURE 1 – Eduardo

Detention transfer path: Eduardo

Cartography by Joseph Stoll
FIGURE 2 – Remigio

Cartography by Joseph Stoll
FIGURE 3 – Hugo

Cartography by Joseph Stoll
FIGURE 4 – Marcelo

Detention transfer path: Marcelo

Cartography by Joseph Stoll
FIGURE 5 – Oscar

Detention transfer path: Oscar

Cartography by Joseph Stoll
FIGURE 6 – Diego

Detention transfer path: Diego

Cartography by Joseph Stoll
CHAPTER SEVEN

“You don’t know how I suffer, waiting every day”:

Fear and Insecurity in Ecuador

Introduction

This chapter identifies ways in which U.S. detention and deportation policies reverberate in the everyday lives of detained migrants’ families, deported migrants, and communities in Ecuador. Through this empirical lens, it becomes clear that the chaos engendered by the D & D system is not contained with the migrant’s incarcerated body, or by the territorial borders of the United States. Instead, it stretches spatially and temporally beyond U.S. borders, into countries of migrant origin. I argue that detention and deportation, immigration enforcement policies framed as necessary for maintaining the homeland security of the United States, create insecurity in Ecuador precisely at the scale of the home. By focusing on Ecuador, I contribute to a nuanced understanding of how policy is embodied across scales and national borders. The chapter further concludes that the deterrence paradigm driving policies like detention and deportation is inherently flawed.

As discussed in Chapter One, the figure of the excludable, othered migrant is at the heart of the master narrative of homeland security. In the contemporary climate of the war on terror, exclusive ideas of home have become central to national belonging (Kaplan 2003; Walters 2004; Cowen and Gilbert 2008). Indeed, Cowen and Gilbert (2008, 50) assert, “the familial home/land is celebrated as a space of security.” Through
the depiction of the immigrant as other, immigrants come to represent the inverse of, and a danger to, the American family, home, and way of life (Kaplan 2003; Walters 2004; Cowen and Gilbert 2008; Hyndman and Mountz 2008; De Genova 2009). The deep-seated fear of immigrants consequent to this representation acts as an important adhesive for the nation (Kaplan 2003; Walters 2004; Hyndman and Mountz 2008). Fear then becomes a geopolitical tool, useful for propelling and justifying extreme measures purportedly in defense of homeland security (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Hyndman 2007b; Pain and Smith 2008; Pain 2010). Critical scholars contend, however, that there is an inverse relationship between actions taken in the name of protecting the American family and home, and experiences of fear and insecurity for those who are excluded from the idealized homeland (Kaplan 2003; Cowen and Gilbert 2008; Hyndman and Mountz 2008; Staeheli and Nagel 2008; Pain 2010). As Cowen and Gilbert (2008, 50) note, "The fixing of the familial in national space may make possible the management of pain for globally privileged forms of injury, and yet also fuels the infliction of tremendous violence and suffering at 'home' and abroad." Pain (2010, 228) observes that “those most affected by fear in the current geopolitical climate are marginalized minority groups.”

This chapter aims to disrupt these foundations of homeland security by pulling attention to experiences of fear and insecurity beyond those referenced in dominant western narratives, to scales “finer and coarser” (Hyndman 2004, 315) than the nation-state. By focusing on homes and families outside the United States, in a country of migrant origin, I aim to pry open U.S.-centric ideas of home and family. This approach also reveals the duplicity of fear, or how it is both the justification for and consequence of
certain policies. Fear and insecurity become analytical lenses for understanding geopolitical maneuverings and their aftermath (Hyndman 2007a; Pain and Smith 2008; Staeheli and Nagel 2008; Pain 2009, 2010). Emotion is thus an important metric by which to assess how these policies are embodied at finer scales and across geopolitical boundaries (Bondi, Davidson, and Smith 2005; Pain 2009). As Pain and Smith (2008, 4) note, “Places [today] are more intimately connected, and so too follows fear.” Furthermore, by tracing the geopolitics of the emotions generated by the D & D system to a country of migrant origin, I force consideration of experiences of insecurity which do not fit neatly into the master narrative of homeland security. This approach also challenges Western assumptions regarding the universality of fear and, therefore, the ideological foundations of the system itself.

The greater part of this chapter explores ways in which detention and deportation generate fear and insecurity in Ecuador. Then, I assess the success of the deterrence paradigm driving these policies through various metrics.

Chaotic Geographies of Detention and Deportation in Ecuador

U.S. policies regarding detention and deportation produce chaotic geographies that extend to countries of migrant origin to form additional topographies of disorder and confusion. I now explore how this extension shapes fear and insecurity in Ecuador. I first describe how the chaotic structure and operation of the D & D system interrupts the rhythms of daily life for detainees’ family members. Then, I discuss how these
enforcement practices generate economic and ontological insecurities for family members, deportees, and more broadly at the scale of the community.

**Detention and the Tenor of Absence**

Detention violently alters the tenor of a migrant’s physical absence. As evidenced in the previous chapter, legal and spatio-temporal indeterminacy is a “distinguishing characteristic” of detention (Martin and Mitchelson 2009, 465). Fieldwork in Ecuador shows that this indeterminancy leaches out beyond the migrant detention system, U.S. borders, and into local, personal spaces and places in Ecuador. While the separation of families due to migration is quite common in Azuay and Cañar, it does not necessarily entail family disintegration (Herrera 2004; Pribilsky 2004). As explained in Chapter Three, families geographically divided by migration often establish patterns of communication, by phone, letters, email, or video conferencing (Pribilsky 2004; Jokisch and Kyle 2006). Therefore, while these families are not physically proximate, their daily patterns incorporate mutual awareness, and a family member’s absence, while perhaps difficult, is not experienced as a gnawing, threatening question. For families of migrants journeying to the United States, the difficulty of separation can be softened with hope about the future, which disappears once the migrant is detained. The D & D system’s unpredictability and opacity change the ways in which a migrant’s absence is experienced. The emotions of detainees’ family members mark these shifts in the perception of absence, which becomes more disruptive, traumatic, and a source of fear.
Therefore, while migration transforms family structures and roles, detention has the power to abruptly distort and rupture them.

The knowledge or suspicion that a migrant has been detained typically causes preoccupation and distress for relatives in Ecuador. The following encounter at the Casa del Migrante exemplifies reactions: “[Marco’s] sister and mother came in. Friends in New York told them he was detained maybe a month ago; they haven’t heard from him and are very worried . . . His mother cried several times and begged me to find him” (Research journal, June 1, 2009). Similarly, the wife of detainee José Carlos said, “That is why I came to the Casa del Migrante, because I was desperate. I didn’t know if he was alive, okay, sick. I didn’t know anything, nothing, there is no communication.”

As explained in Chapter Five, relatives want to know a migrant’s location, what is happening to him, if he is safe, if and when he will be deported. Such knowledge, however, is often unobtainable, as family members immediately confront the seemingly impenetrable, chaotic D & D system. The isolation imposed on detainees, explored in the previous chapter, multiplies the strength of the transnational information barrier relatives confront. Family members in Ecuador and migrants living in the United States often maintain contact by cell phone, and detention instantly cuts that line of communication. Contact is likewise interrupted for migrants en route to the United States who typically call periodically throughout their journey. As already described, detainees contend with many difficulties when attempting to communicate, such as restricted phone access, exorbitant call rates, surveillance, and frequent transfers. If detained migrants do manage to call Ecuador, due to the short duration of calls they often fail to communicate
information that would enable family members to obtain more information, such as facility name or A Number. In addition, detainees’ disorientation regarding their location may preclude the communication of accurate information. For relatives in Ecuador, determining how to locate a detainee or acquire additional information is overwhelming. Then, if relatives are able to ascertain where to call, they often confront unfamiliar automated phone systems and a language barrier.

Other modes of communication are also complicated. Visitation by relatives or friends in the United States is nearly impossible because migrants are typically detained in remote, inaccessible locations. Additionally, the undocumented status of many Ecuadorians living in the United States can prevent contact. I recorded this interaction with family members of detainee Marco: “[Marco’s sister] said everyone they knew in the U.S. is without papers so can’t go to see him. The mother, crying, asked if there was any way to talk to him. I said no, but perhaps they could send a letter” (Research journal, June 15, 2009). In order to send a letter, family members must obtain an address for the detention center and, often, the detainee’s A Number. Then, the frequency of unexpected transfers increases the possibility that the detainee will never receive the letter. Due to these many challenges, attempts to locate detainees and verify their situation often become a principal source of frustration and anxiety. For many relatives in Ecuador, therefore, while detained a migrant painfully disappears.

Given the many barriers to communicating, simply locating a detained migrant can feel like a major success. Learning details regarding a detainee’s situation can calm and comfort loved ones, which I witnessed repeatedly at the Casa del Migrante. For
example, “I called the ICE Texas … and they told me that Rodrigo has a valid travel document, and is scheduled to fly to Ecuador on [date]. I called his home and told them that. [A relative said] ‘Thank you very much, señorita, we have been desperate. Now a bit more relaxed’” (Research journal, April 16, 2009). David’s relatives had heard from a smuggler that he was detained, but they had not been able to confirm this for several weeks. My research journal recorded this joyful reaction: “When [David’s] two sisters-in-law came in and Carmen told them we’d ‘found’ him, they whooped and jumped up and down!” (Research journal, April 14, 2009). As my research journal continues, however, David’s relatives “immediately wanted to talk to him and I had to explain that at Eloy [Detention Center in Eloy, Arizona] that isn’t possible.” Relief and joy, therefore, can quickly give way to frustration as family members confront the unpredictability and opacity of the D & D system.

Often faced with a dearth of information, family members imagine spaces of detention through conjecture and fear, constructing images of detention by drawing on other accounts they have heard. Sometimes they envision detention as worse than it (usually) actually is. The following journal excerpt records an encounter with parents of two detained brothers: “I relayed the info … and comforted them about the probable conditions of the detention centers, that their sons were likely being fed and treated well, just waiting and waiting. That seemed to relieve the mother who was worried that they were in horrible places” (Research journal, January 26, 2009). Like this mother, some relatives expressed fears that imprisoned migrants did not receive food or beds if no one paid the jail directly, as rumored to be the case in transit countries such as Mexico and
Guatemala. Intersections between the migrant detention system and the criminal punishment system add to relatives’ fears: “The mother [of Paúl] was crying, wanted to talk to him directly. She has heard horrible stories about police abuse in U.S. jails and people being killed by guards” (Research journal, April 6, 2009).

Relatives in Ecuador, like detainees, may feel profoundly disoriented and frustrated by the D & D system. Many aspects of its operation are incomprehensible, such as frequent transfers between facilities and extended detention durations. The family of Patricia, for example, did not understand why she remained in detention a month after her capture on the border: “The sister said, with tears in her eyes, that everyone in the family is so worried about Patricia, that her parents are consumed thinking about her, wondering if she is locked up so long because she is being hit and robbed” (Research journal, June 15, 2009). The mother of detainee Faustino was perplexed and frightened by the lengthy detention time and the impossibility of speaking with him. She “wanted to know if they could pay his passage to get him home sooner…[She said] ‘You don’t know how I suffer, waiting every day, without knowing when he is coming and if he is okay’” (Research journal, February 11, 2009). Furthermore, the fact that the migrant will almost certainly be deported regardless of the time detained is baffling.

In addition, it was difficult to fathom that a migrant could be tried and imprisoned in the regular criminal system for months or years before passing to ICE custody and starting the process of deportation. For instance, “[Marco’s mother asked] if I had more information, and when I said he had another court date, she started crying and asked if he’d be home this week. She really doesn’t understand” (Research journal, June 15,
2009). Also, the punishments for particular criminalized acts are markedly different from the United States to Ecuador. For example, offenses such as driving without a license, driving under the influence of a substance, and domestic abuse are considered minor infractions in Ecuador, punishable with a ticket and fine. Therefore, incarceration and expulsion are interpreted as vastly incommensurate with the severity of such actions.

Feelings of powerlessness may add to family members’ distress. They may be frustrated that they are unable to do anything to help the detained migrant. In response to Carlos’s pleas for information regarding when he would be deported, in addition to visiting the Casa del Migrante repeatedly his relatives frequented two other government offices, a religious-based organization, and several lawyers. Also, I noted this reaction when discussing Daniela’s detention with her father after she was deported: “You could tell it wounded his pride and hurt him emotionally when he could do nothing to help his detained daughter” (Research journal, April 29, 2009).

The conditions of detention are another source of concern for relatives in Ecuador. Detainees who are able to communicate may relate troublesome details, as shown in this journal entry: “[Antonio’s sister] said that her brother had called her father (who is also in the U.S.) to say that he didn’t get three meals a day, sometimes just one” (Research journal, July 29, 2009). Family members of Patricia, whose situation of harassment in detention was included in Chapter Five, were immensely upset when they implored me for help at the Casa del Migrante. Relatives also worry about how the isolation imposed by the D & D system affects detained migrants after they expressed frustration with their situation: “[Paúl’s father] said that he had talked to Paúl’s sister
[who lived in the United States], and she said he was desperate to get any info, that no one was telling him anything” (Research journal, March 2, 2009). Another recurring source of uneasiness was detainees’ medical conditions, and fear that they were not receiving appropriate treatment. For example, Carlos called his family and “asked them to do anything they could to get him out, that he is sick. His left arm and side are numb, which has happened to him before when stressed” (Research journal, June 26, 2009).

Concerns regarding appropriate care for the psychological trauma induced by detention surfaced repeatedly as well: “[Marcelo’s sister] asked if there was medical care in the facility, said Marcelo had called a family member in the U.S. crying, depressed, desperate without any information” (Research journal, April 3, 2009).

The often disorderly circumstances of deportation cause further anxiety. Due to the way in which the D & D system operates, family members rarely have advance notice of a deportee’s arrival. As previously indicated, detainees are usually unable to communicate to relatives regarding their return. When migrants are deported on commercial flights, the Ecuadorian government is typically not informed that deportees are on board until the plane lands, so it can do nothing to inform family members. For JPATS flights, the ICE usually issues a passenger list to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Relations one to five days prior to the flight, which the Ministry then transmits by email or fax to organizations like the Casa del Migrante. Only family members who have sought assistance at such organizations, however, can be contacted, and the majority of relatives do not seek such help. For instance, the Casa usually had family contact information for no more than five deportees for a typical list of seventy to one hundred
and twenty names. Most relatives are aware of the fact that detainees frequently arrive without money in their possession. Consequently, they are preoccupied by how migrants will make the journey from the city in which they arrive to home. Additionally, family members expressed concern regarding the physical conditions of deportation. For example, detainee Diego’s sister said “she was worried about how he would be treated during the deportation. From other acquaintances who had been deported she had heard that they come shackled hands and feet, in prison clothes” (Research journal, April 7, 2009). Furthermore, there were numerous instances in which some of the migrants on the list did not arrive, which caused further distress for relatives: “The mother of Bolívar and mother-in-law of Jorge came in, distraught. They did not arrive on the Friday plane, despite being on the DRO list that was received last Thursday. She said she and some other family members had gone to Guayaquil in the rain and gotten soaked and then waited and waited and others got off the plane but they never did!” (Research journal, February 9, 2009). To such family members the misinformation consequent to the chaotic operation of the D & D system is yet another frustrating injustice.

It is important to note the direct relationship between feelings of insecurity on the part of D & D system employees and family members’ experiences of insecurity in Ecuador. Employees’ actions and decisions may determine the degree of information that relatives are able to acquire. The fact that return flight information was guarded, for example, caused anxiety for family members. In Chapter Five, I discussed a phone conversation with an employee during which she refused to share the date of detainee Patricia’s deportation, saying that the information was “confidential for the safety of the
Her refusal to share information reflects the disciplining force of the master narrative of homeland security, in which migrants are depicted as threatening and inherently capable of wrongdoing. Her fear of migrants thus contributes to Ecuadorian family members’ fears and frustrations. Also, on several occasions, system personnel with whom I spoke informed me that if a detainee wanted his relatives to know his A Number, he would have told them. This response implies that the detainee simply did not care to maintain contact, perhaps revealing a negative scripting of migrants in which they do not value family.

The next two sections consider ways in which detention and deportation produce economic and ontological insecurity in Ecuador. These collective insecurities, I show, then reverberate more broadly through communities.

Economic Insecurity

The following journal excerpt records an encounter with detainee Carlos’s mother, who was caring for Carlos’s two daughters in his absence (Research journal, June 25, 2009):

   The mother of Carlos came in again. She teared up several times, saying they were desperate for him to get back, she and his kids are so anxious, that they didn’t have any money left to buy food, that the kids were just eating once a day, and they didn’t have money to pay school fees, that she didn’t know what to do, and why can’t they just send him, they’ve been waiting so long.
After a migrant is detained, family members’ lives may be permeated by an overwhelming sense of worry not just for the detainee, but for their own material well-being. There are numerous ways in which detention and then deportation produce economic uncertainty and disorder. This discussion includes consideration of personal resources that may be consumed, such as time and energy, in addition to financial resources.

The most immediate economic consequence of detention is loss of remittance income. As discussed in Chapter Three, the financial security of many households in Ecuador, particularly in the Azuay and Cañar region, is heavily dependent on remittances. While a migrant is detained he or she can do nothing to support relatives in Ecuador. Consequently, dependent families may be suddenly unable to pay for a range of living expenses, such as food, housing, medical care, and school fees. Their daily lives may be abruptly disrupted, becoming more insecure and precarious the longer a migrant is detained. For example, “the sister of Pedro came in [to the Casa del Migrante] saying that they were desperate, that they needed Pedro to come back to help them financially, that they couldn’t support the children” (Research journal, February 10, 2009). What’s more, relatives may be unable to maintain payments on the migrant’s debts (in the case that the migrant was caught attempting to migrate, or had been living in the United States too short of a time to pay the smuggling debt), and moneylenders may begin to pressure the family regarding payment. The consequences for failing to pay may be severe. For example, detainee Paulino’s sister reported that “her brother was desperate to get out, get
back here, and work to pay the debt to the bank so they don’t take his house” (Research journal, August 3, 2009).

Christian, Mellow, and Thomas (2006) found that for the families of prisoners in the U.S. criminal incarceration system, efforts to maintain contact with prisoners can have considerable economic and social costs. Likewise, relatives in Ecuador often expend significant money and effort in attempts to simply obtain information about a detained migrant. The elderly father of Paúl, a migrant who was finally deported after almost eight months of imprisonment (six months in the criminal prison system for the charges of DWI and resisting arrest), came to the Casa del Migrante on a weekly basis for six months to inquire about any new developments regarding his son’s situation. The father lived over an hour away by bus, and the round trip cost around $5, likely a considerable portion of his overall income, particularly since until his detention Paúl supported his parents with regular remittances. Additionally, numerous relatives in Ecuador endeavored to send money to a detained migrant in order to facilitate a direct call. This can be an exceedingly complicated process, involving verifying the detainee’s location, a Number, and negotiating the particular money transfer system used by that detention center. I worked with the family of David over the course of several weeks, for example, as they tried to send him money so that he could call. David was detained in a facility in Eloy, Arizona, but money had to be sent via Western Union to a Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) office in Tennessee, using an account code generated for David. His relatives made multiple attempts over three weeks before successfully transferring money, foiled first by the provision of an incorrect code by the CCA office, then by
logistical issues with Western Union in Cuenca. In addition to the money that was actually transferred, the family expended substantial energy and time.

Financial insecurity may also deepen through family members’ attempts to assist a detainee by hiring a lawyer, either in Ecuador or the United States. This expense, typically thousands of dollars, is usually assumed as (additional) debt. For instance, Marcía’s detained husband asked her to send $3000 to the United States to pay for a lawyer so he could fight his deportation. She agonized about what to do; she would have to take out a loan to fulfill his request, thereby adding to her already difficult financial situation without her husband’s remittances – particularly if he was still deported.

Unfortunately, the maelstrom of the D & D system has also created space for dishonesty and downright scams, in the United States as well as in countries of migrant origin. For instance, I spoke with a relative of detained migrant Iván, who “had talked to a lawyer who said that the family should pay for him (the lawyer) to fly to Quito to talk to the [Ministry of Foreign Relations] or the U.S. Embassy to make a request that Iván be transferred to Ecuador to serve his time” (Research journal, May 15, 2009). With minimal knowledge of the D & D system, one understands that both of these efforts would have been fruitless. While there are many honest lawyers who work tirelessly pro bono or at reduced rates to help detainees either by fighting removal or shortening detention times, there are also many lawyers who charge exorbitant amounts to take cases

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93 This amount of money would likely have covered only the lawyer’s fees for the migrant’s first court appearance. To pay a private lawyer to fight a deportation, a process which takes months or years, costs many times more.
with virtually no chance of success. Paradoxically, as discussed in the previous chapter, such expenditures can significantly lengthen the migrant’s detention time, with the same result of deportation.

Deportation does not bring an end to economic insecurity. Typically, deported migrants immediately face a grim financial reality. As Manuel explained, “As soon as I arrived in Ecuador, there came my debts – boom, boom, boom – everything at once.” Deportees return to the same economic situation that pushed them to migrate: high labor market competition, wages incommensurate with the cost of living, and limited government support (Carriere 2001; Acosta, López, and Williams 2004; Jokisch 2001). Now, too, there is increasing competition from in-migrants from Colombia and Peru (Jokisch and Kyle 2006; Bowditch 2009a). Not only are jobs sparse, but the wages may seem trivial in comparison to what migrants earned in the United States. As deportee Luis put it, “Working here – it just isn’t enough!” Many deportees, like Manuel, also face pending debts; this was the case for seventeen of the forty interviewees. Indebtedness may be particularly severe for migrants apprehended at the border because they did not have the opportunity to pay any portion of the amount paid the smuggler. After Daniela’s deportation, her mother explained that finances for the entire family were constrained because their house had been mortgaged to pay for Daniela’s migration.

Finally, economic insecurity for migrants and their families has the potential to reverberate throughout their communities. Remittances lost to families are also lost to the communities in which they would have been spent. As explained in Chapter Three, many local businesses have become highly dependent on migration and migration monies. This
dependence can be both direct, as in international calling centers and shipping industries, and indirect, such as high-end boutiques catering to relatives with remittance money to spend. The general cost of living in the region has been inflated due to the availability of remittances. Indeed, Ecuadorian economists worry that a surge in return migration could add significantly to the country’s economic woes (Bowditch 2008, 2009a). What’s more, there is little governmental infrastructure in place to financially assist deportees and their families (El Universo 2008).\footnote{In short, local economies in Ecuador are not prepared for the decreasing remittances and increasing labor market competition that detention and deportation may occasion.}

Ontological Insecurity

The concept of ontological insecurity, as explained in Chapter Five, draws on Giddens’ (1991) definition of ontological security. It implies a sense of instability and fear provoked by feelings of uncertainty and the perception of disorder. The idea of ontological insecurity points, once again, to the importance of considering the emotional dimensions of insecurity. In this section, I discuss ways in which detention and deportation engender ontological insecurity for family members, deported migrants, and communities in Ecuador.

Detention may lead to alteration or disruption of relatives’ established daily patterns in ways that evoke a personal sense of disorientation and chaos. This may occur

\footnote{The few federal programs that offered financial support to returned migrants reached an almost inconsequential percentage of those returning. To my reading, they seemed to be orchestrated more to garner political support.}
through the time-consuming efforts to obtain information about or assist detainees discussed above. Also, family members’ worries and fears regarding detention can be internalized in ways that have serious ramifications for their own mental and physical health. Many Ecuadorians indicated high levels of psychological distress as they waited for information or deportation, and worried about the experience of the detained migrant as well as the situation of their family in Ecuador. I recorded the following interaction with family members of a detainee: “The mother was the most upset, saying she can’t sleep for worrying, and cried again” (Research journal, July 2, 2009). Similarly, Daniela’s mother, already on hypertension medication, related that the stress of her daughter’s detention was making it difficult to sleep, and her blood pressure was out of control.

Then, economic insecurity may force changes in social worlds, personal mobility, and outlook. Family members may no longer have money to pay for educational and recreational activities, and those families in dire economic straits are unable to pay for routine or emergency medical care. In the case of Carlos’s family members (quoted above), they were eating only once a day, which is a situation that affects daily security in myriad ways. Additionally, several family members remarked that they did not like leaving the house anymore for fear of seeing people to whom they owed money, or for not wanting to explain situations of detention and deportation to others. Patrons at the Casa del Migrante also indicated that deportation could be a source of shame and embarrassment. Relatives, too, expressed a sense of anxiety and loss about their own material existence, including fear regarding the future. The sister of Marco, awaiting her
brother’s deportation, lamented, “What will we do now? We still have almost all his debt” (Research journal, June 1, 2009).

While deportation signifies the end to the indeterminate waiting and stress related to detention for family members and deportees, there are often new crises to address. The detention experience itself may contribute to continued health problems. In several cases during my fieldwork, migrants returned with significant medical issues that required treatment. For example, the mother of deportee Efraín “said he was sick in the detention center, and they had given him an IV and were going to do some other treatment but because he was coming back to Ecuador soon they didn’t. She said they are working on getting him healthy here” (Research journal, February 10, 2009). The scars from detention can also be psychological. When I called deportee Patricia’s sister to inquire about the possibility of an interview with Patricia, she “said that Patricia hasn’t been talking much because she is depressed about what happened to her there” (Research journal, August 4, 2009). Health crises may persist for relatives of deportees as well. When I saw Daniela’s father months after her return, he told me that he was “still suffering, receiving some kind of treatment for his nerves that started while she was gone” (Research journal, May 23, 2009).

Deportation may bring joyful reunions and the resumption or re-building of family relationships. Due to the disruption of daily patterns in both the United States and Ecuador, however, deportation rarely leads to a seamless return to the patterns of pre-migration life for all involved. If the deportee has been in the United States for a long period of time, for instance, he may return to a different familial and social landscape in
Ecuador than that which he left. Spouses may have found new partners. Children may have developed relationships with other family members to substitute for an absent parent (Escobar 2008). Precisely by virtue of their return, migrants who had contributed to their family primarily through the sending of remittance money may find themselves uncertain of their family role. Additionally, arrival in Ecuador may signify the violent severing of established lives in the United States. As Coutin (2010a, 205) found in El Salvador, “For deportees who spent a significant portion of their lives in the United States . . . presence within their country of origin is simultaneously absence from the United States, and is therefore akin to exile.” Many deportees expressed distress at the abrupt cutting of relationships (El Universo 2009a). Tommy, for instance, explained, “They grabbed me on a Wednesday, and I was getting married on Friday. Only two days before my wedding!” Five of the forty interviewees were separated from children in the United States, a situation which generated tremendous anguish. Ronaldo, a recent deportee, had been separated from his wife and two young children in the United States. He said that he called home every day, but his children did not understand his absence, and his wife was struggling to pay for housing on her own. Furthermore, deportees often felt a huge sense of material loss. Once taken into custody, if they do not have family or friends who can assist them, migrants are unable to attend to personal belongings. Juan Pablo told of begging ICE officials, “when the police were deporting me, I said, please, just let me be, I’ve got part of my life made here, I have to get out to see what happened to all my things.” Interviewees had stories of cars left on the street and savings accounts rendered inaccessible because of lost account information.
Deportees’ sense of exile can dominate their return to Ecuador in ways that complicate the (re)formation of relationships. Esteban, for example, was deported after living in the United States for sixteen years. Seven weeks after Esteban’s arrival in Ecuador, his adult son relayed,

It is very sad. He is sixty-four, and he can’t get work. About three or four years ago he had given up drinking. With all this he entered into a, an emotional shock, and started to drink again. And I tell you that he already tried to commit suicide two weeks ago…So as his son, I am very excited, and content to have my father back after so many years but I am sad to see, to see him as a person totally broken, lost, totally destroyed.

Deportees, like Esteban, may experience depression. They may feel that they do not belong in the supposed home to which they have been exiled. Coutin (2010a, 205) writes that, “deportees’ prior history – the normalcy that they established in the United States and that was erased through detention and deportation – continues to differentiate them from other Salvadorans, placing them apart, and . . . creating internal spatial boundaries.”

For example, deportee Joaquín’s mother called the Casa del Migrante soon after her son’s arrival, reporting that he was not acclimating to life in Ecuador, and wanted to return to the United States as soon as possible. The very fact of deportation may be associated with a stigma of failure in ways that mark returned migrants (Ellerman 2008). Javier explained, “When people know that you have come back in that situation, they say, ‘that person was deported,’ in a way that makes you feel kind of bad.”
Recent studies and reports have detailed ways in which deportation can generate economic and ontological insecurity for children in the United States (e.g. Amnesty International 2009; HURRICANE 2009; Kremer, Moccio, and Hammell 2009; Brabeck and Xu 2010). Data from my fieldwork suggest that the chaos of detention and deportation also increases the ontological insecurity of children in countries of migrant origin. While a migrant is detained, older children in Ecuador may assume the same worries and stresses that adult family members have regarding the detained family member as well as the family’s financial situation in Ecuador. For example, Chapter Four included an account of an emotional phone interaction at the Casa del Migrante between detainee Carlos and his teenage daughter. Carlos was extremely upset, and told his daughter that he should make himself a cadaver because that would bring him home faster. The daughter started to cry, and said, “Papi, don’t do anything to hurt yourself. We need you, we need you! Calm down, calm down” (Research journal, July 2, 2009). For younger children, their understanding of and degree of comfort with a migrant’s absence may be negatively transformed by adults’ reactions or by the difficulty of communicating with detainees. It may also be hard for adults to explain a migrant’s absence when they themselves do not fully understand it or have no timeline for its duration. When I called detainee Saira’s mother, for instance, to give her new information regarding her daughter’s estimated return, “she said she was hoping Saira would return sooner because [Saira’s son] is depressed waiting for her to come home” (Research journal, February 9, 2010).

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95 This project did not involve intentional research with minors. Data is derived from comments made by parents and from situational contact with children accompanying their parents.
Children may also be affected simply by adults’ agitation, even if they do not understand why they are upset.

After deportation, children may have to contend with the disorder of shifting relationships, as described above. In addition, older children may have to adjust how they think about their own future, such as when they are confronted with an inability to pay for continued schooling. Furthermore, decreased family income due to detention and deportation can negatively impact children’s health through reduced medical care and nutrition (Anton 2011). Finally, as occurred in two cases at the Casa del Migrante, profound life changes occur if minor children living in the United States follow deported parents to Ecuador.

Detention and deportation also create insecurity more generally at the local scale. Most obviously, family members who expend time and energy worrying about detained migrants are less able to contribute to their communities. Then, widespread insecurity may arise in the aftermath of deportation. I spoke with numerous Ecuadorians working with issues of migration who expressed concern regarding the impacts that deportation has had and will have on the general public. There are few government resources available to help families cope with traumas associated with detention and deportation, such as issues related to social adjustment or family separation (El Universo 2008). Deportees may also return to Ecuador with problems and histories that ripple beyond their own family. For example, one official attributed the formation of Ecuadorian branches of U.S. gangs to the forced return of migrants (cf. Wolf 2010 on gangs in El Salvador).
Moreover, knowledge of detention and deportation seeps into community consciousness, to alter daily realities in ways that increase fear and insecurity even for Ecuadorians who have not personally come into contact with these enforcement practices. This is illustrated by the following anecdote. While riding a bus on a day trip with my family, I sat next to a woman wearing a baseball cap emblazoned with the words “New York.” When I casually mentioned that I was from New York, she told me that her youngest son had gone to New York a year ago, arriving on his second migration attempt. Starting to cry, she said she worried about him constantly, because she has heard of people being caught and deported. I had not spoken with her about the work that I was doing at the Casa del Migrante. The woman’s awareness demonstrates that even the potential for detention and deportation has the power to shape collective feelings of insecurity.

This discussion of the chaotic geographies of detention and deportation in Ecuador demonstrates that while the narrative of homeland security privileges the idealized American family, it simultaneously propels a D & D system which increases fear and insecurity for families and communities in countries of migrant origin. Family members struggle to imagine spaces of detention, and the uncertainty of waiting distorts everyday activities. Relatives’ attempts to obtain information and help detainees consume resources at the same time as the disruption of support from migrants introduces precariousness into daily lives. Deportation and its aftermath bring another set of insecurities and fears for waiting family members as well as deportees. It becomes evident that the supposed protection of U.S. families and homes through immigration
enforcement policies entails hardship, separation and destruction for migrant families. In the next section, I consider the reverberations of these chaotic geographies in Ecuador alongside U.S. policymakers’ stated objectives.

**Failure of the Deterrence Paradigm**

Throughout the above discussion, it is clear that detention and deportation, immigration enforcement strategies presented as necessary to protect the American “homeland,” produce various insecurities in Ecuadorian homes and communities. In Chapter Two, I illustrated how the assumption that these practices work to deter future migration buttresses policymakers’ investment in them. Therefore, I suggested, authors of statecraft conceptualize detention and deportation as transnational, extra-border mechanisms to control migration. Under this logic of deterrence, then, the subsequent generation of insecurities in Ecuador could be considered a positive outcome, or at least a useful one, because of the presumed deterrent effect. In this section, I contest this logic and contend that the deterrence paradigm itself is inherently flawed. I argue that whatever successes these policies do have in terms of discouraging migration are not sufficiently balanced with their many failures to justify the continued reliance on the deterrence paradigm.

The assumption that immigration enforcement policies influence potential migrants to decide against migration often proves incorrect (Nevins 2002, 2007, 2008; Black et al. 2006; Collyer 2007). Presumably, in the conceptualization of detention and deportation as strategies for deterrence, there are two groups that policymakers hope to
discipline: already-deported migrants and first-time migrants. My data show that, in Ecuador, neither of these groups is categorically dissuaded. Of the forty deportees I interviewed, twenty-one indicated that another attempt to migrate to the United States was certain or likely. It is also possible that some interviewees who said that they would not return did not feel sufficiently comfortable with this question from a U.S. interviewer to answer candidly. Indeed, an Ecuadorian newspaper reported that 80 percent of arriving deportees said that they were going to attempt to return (El Tiempo 2009). My data show that repeated migration attempts are common. Nine interviewees had been deported two or more times. Also, there were numerous deportees I tried to contact whose relatives said they had already returned to the United States. As for the second group, potential new migrants, the frequency with which new border-apprehension detention cases came into the Casa del Migrante indicates that there is still significant first-time migration to the United States. Headlines announcing the arrival of deported migrants frequently punctuate local and national news media (e.g. El Mercurio 2009; El Universo 2009b), and increasing numbers of Ecuadorians have heard of someone being deported. Just as migration is embedded in local communities’ realities, increasingly awareness of detention and deportation is, too. Clearly, despite growing knowledge of and experience with the U.S. D & D system and the danger of the often harrowing journey north, many Ecuadorians continue to attempt migration to the United States.

Still, despite this evidence of continued migration, restrictive enforcement policies may be viewed as successful from certain perspectives. Migration policies are undoubtedly understood as powerful from the perspective of Ecuadorians who desire to
migrate to the United States. Brubaker (1994, 230) argues that while immigration control policies are often judged as flawed in the context of national debates regarding unauthorized entry, “seen from the outside – from the perspective of those turned down for tourist visas, or those at the end of a twenty-year waiting list for admission, or those willing to pay large sums of money and undertake risky voyages in order to circumvent barriers to entry – immigration control appears all too effective.” Additionally, to many policymakers, an almost 50 percent deterrent effect as indicated by my data (or even 20 percent as suggested by the cited newspaper article) constitutes a success. And indeed, it must be noted that the perceived difficulty of migrating to the United States contributed to the choice of Europe over the United States by Ecuadorian migrants outside of Azuay and Cañar (and without the benefit of established networks) at the time of the late 1990s crisis (Jokisch 2001; Marrero 2004). For many policymakers, then, some deterrent effect is better than none at all.

By introducing other metrics, however, I show that additional consequences of the deterrence paradigm far outweigh its limited deterrent effect. Here, I discuss four ways in which the concept of deterrence fails. First, assumptions of deterrence do not take into account the structural factors behind migration (Nevins 2002, 2007, 2008; Bauder 2006; Black et al. 2006; Collyer 2007). As elaborated in Chapter Three, Ecuadorian migration to the United States is underpinned by a host of factors, including interdependent economies, socioeconomic inequality, instability tied to neoliberal deregulation, and the development of transnational networks. Migration has altered local economies, culture, and material and social life, especially in the Azuay-Cañar region. Additionally, as stated
above, the economic conditions that spurred massive Ecuadorian migration in the late 1990s persist. Both deportees and first-time migrants make mobility decisions in the context of these conditions. Against the backdrop of a perpetually weak Ecuadorian economy, the lure of the possible rewards of migration can be irresistible, despite awareness of the risk involved. For example, three days after her deportation, Elsa explained her thought process as she decided whether or not to make another migration attempt:

I don’t know, I have to think . . . because here the economic situation is very difficult. I know that [in the United States] it isn’t easy either, but at least you earn more. But I also have to think about if I die in the desert, and after [my family] comes here crying to ask you to bring my body back.

Elsa ultimately decided to try again. In Ecuadorian culture, migration is often perceived as the responsible choice. As a deportee in the vignette opening the dissertation said to me, “What is there for me here? Nothing. I have to go back. I have to do it for my family.”

Personal and familial debt is an important factor in Ecuadorians’ decisions to migrate (El Universo 2008). As Stoll (2010) found in Guatemala, migration often initiates a cycle of debt that drives continued migration. Migrants who are deported before they can repay their migration debt typically feel that they have no option but to migrate again (Stoll 2010). For example, Santiago had been apprehended twice at the U.S.-Mexico border and deported both times. In order to fund his migration journey, he had mortgaged
agricultural land that was his family’s primary source of income as well as where their home sat. While Santiago did not want to make a third attempt, he struggled to find an alternative. The story of Saira, who had been apprehended at the U.S. border and detained for four months, is also telling. When I interviewed her six weeks after deportation, she stated that she definitely did not want to risk another migration attempt,

When I arrived here [after deportation], I felt a little bad because I hadn’t reached my dream but I was also happy because I am here with my son … because when I was there I realized that I shouldn’t have left him. Being jailed made me think about a lot of things. I thank God that I am here in my country with my son and my family, in good health.

However, when I spoke with Saira three months later, she had changed her mind, saying, “My debts are crushing me, I have no choice” (Research journal, July 20, 2009).

Similarly, when asked if he would migrate again, deportee Jorge said that he was only waiting until a warmer season (in northern Mexico) to make the journey. He explained that he had too many debts, and in Ecuador he could not find employment that earned enough to pay them. Deterrence-driven policies do nothing to mitigate these structural factors that drive continued migration. Instead, detention and deportation, as this discussion illustrates, are temporary, ineffective, and injurious patches implemented in lieu of addressing global inequalities that propel migration.

Second, the deterrence paradigm flatly discounts the value of the non-‘American’ family. As discussed in Chapter Three, (failed) U.S. policies regarding family
reunification, especially the difficulty in obtaining a family visa, contribute to undocumented migration (Herrera 2008). Additionally, deportation can be understood as a policy of family separation, in that the deportation of parents means the destruction of migrant families in the United States (Amnesty International 2009; Kremer, Moccio, and Hammell 2009; HURRICANE 2009). Parents forcefully separated from children may be determined to reunite with them. One deportee with whom I spoke had a five year old son who remained in the United States. She said that, “she is going to try to cross again and she’ll do whatever it takes to see him, even if it means more time in U.S. detention. She has already spent several months detained and she was told the next time she is caught it could be a year” (Research journal, January 21, 2009). Ronaldo, the deportee mentioned above who had been separated from his two children, came in to the Casa del Migrante to inquire about possibilities for legal return migration. Upon learning that it was unlikely, he said that, regardless, he would find a way to return to his family. Contrary to the negative light in which homeland security discourses portray othered migrant families, Ecuadorians’ efforts to reunite their families demonstrate that family ties are as important to migrants as they are to North Americans. The concept of deterrence is shown to be morally hollow in its disregard for othered, “foreign” families.

Third, the deterrence paradigm contributes to the growing human smuggling industry. As explored in Chapter Three, by adopting increasingly more restrictive enforcement policies that make migration more difficult, policymakers essentially nurture the development of smuggling networks (Salt and Stein 1997; Andreas 2001; Kyle and Dale 2001). The business of human smuggling itself then plays a role in the perpetuation
of migration. In the interest of generating customers, people within the networks actively recruit new migrants (Andreas 2001; Kyle and Liang 2001). If potential migrants raise concerns regarding detention in and deportation from the United States or transit countries, smugglers are quick to assure the migrants that they know how to avoid capture. While smugglers will not return money if a migrant is deported, they do include multiple attempts in the price. Smugglers, then, essentially build the risk of detention and deportation into their operating costs. Deterrence-driven policies thus undergird Ecuador’s growing smuggling industry.

Fourth, the insecurities created by policies like detention and deportation paradoxically work against deterrence aims by contributing to additional migration. Restrictive immigration enforcement practices drive up the cost of illicit migration and, therefore, the debt assumed by migrants and their families. As Stoll (2010) found in Guatemala, the existence of debt not only exerts significant pressure on deportees to attempt return migration, but additional family members may migrate in order to help relieve existing debt burdens. Also, it appears that the increasing banality of detention and deportation works to neutralize their intended effects. For example, with the increase in people who have experienced these practices, more information becomes available about what is entailed, and they thus become less exceptional and frightening. It follows that the deterrent effect of detention and deportation is diminished. The short-term deterrent effects these policies have, therefore, may be ultimately eclipsed by the additional new migration they provoke.
Finally, the potential for deterrence-driven policies to elevate migration rates also lies in an understanding of security that is markedly different from the meaning inherent to narratives of homeland security. As discussed in Chapter Three, throughout the recent history of Ecuador, rising household instability has contributed to greater international mobility. Migration has in effect become embedded in Ecuadorians’ collective consciousness as an appropriate escape mechanism for insecurity. Indeed, I frequently heard relatives protest that “She was only trying to work!” when reacting to information about a migrant’s detention. Ecuadorians perceive migration as a legitimate strategy to confront and resist insecurity, an act taken to rectify what they perceive as unjust inequality. Kyle and Siracusa (2005, 157) posit, “Illegal migrants often view themselves as a type of economic citizen of the political economic empire Western states and transnational corporations have created.” What’s more, after already investing significant amounts of money, time, and suffering in their migration attempt, deportees may feel, as Collyer (2007, 686) found, that “migration owes them something.” Collyer’s work suggests that the more time spent in detention, the more determined a potential migrant may become to succeed in migration. Migration, therefore, continues despite and because of the possibility of detention and deportation. Contrary to the meanings embedded in ideas of homeland security, then, to migrants international mobility is not illegal or morally wrong. It is a right. It follows that migration will be utilized as an individual and community strategy to mitigate the economic and ontological insecurities produced by policies such as detention and deportation.
While detention and deportation do work biopolitically in Ecuador, they do not work solely in ways intended by policymakers. The deterrence paradigm, I argue, fails both because of what it ignores and what it enables. It is based on assumptions that ignore the structural and emotional reasons for migration. It enables policies that generate insecurity at multiple scales inside and outside the United States. Policies that value the partial achievement of deterrence above all other outcomes, I suggest, thus ultimately contribute to the perpetuation of cycles of global inequality and human mobility.

**Conclusion**

I have argued that while supposedly orchestrated to pacify the homeland security-generated fears of U.S. citizens, the chaotic geographies of detention and deportation simultaneously elevate fear and insecurity in countries of migrant origin. They do so by disrupting and altering topographies of the everyday, even beyond the end of a particular migration experience. In addition, while extra-territorial reverberations may actually be the intention of policymakers, my analysis suggests that quite often detention and deportation do not have the desired disciplinary effect of deterring migration. I venture, however, that the policy “failure” of continued international migration to the United States may actually be considered a policy success by some. This dissertation has discussed the existence of other drivers at work in the D & D system, such as the maintenance of a flexible and inexpensive labor force, quests for personal power, and the generation of corporate profit. We might then interpret the chaos engendered by detention and deportation in Ecuador as a desired policy outcome from certain perspectives, in that
it obscures both the insecurity created by the system and the consequences of that insecurity. In this reading, the creation of insecurity in Ecuador serves to resolve the contradiction between objectives of, on the one hand, deterring migration and, on the other, generating profit from the management of migrant bodies.

The geographic distance of origin countries together with constructions of difference may make the daily realities of migrants and their families seem remote and inconsequential to both U.S. policymakers and public. Failure to acknowledge these realities, however, leads to consequences that work contrary to policymakers’ objectives. As this chapter made clear, the people most affected by homeland security policies experience fear and insecurity in ways that are vastly different from the understandings of fear and insecurity that are central to the logics of homeland security (Kaplan 2003; Staeheli and Nagel 2008). It is my hope that attention to Ecuadorians’ emotions and everyday realities contributes to the project of deconstructing hegemonic images of migrants in ways that shift the powerful processes of othering implicit in the narrative of homeland security. Such a shift may then contribute to the adoption of more human-focused narratives and, therefore, more humane and realistic policymaking.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

Chaos, Security, and the State

This dissertation has scrutinized U.S. policies of migrant detention and deportation through ethnographic research with family members of detained migrants and deportees in Ecuador. I have argued that while these enforcement practices are purportedly undertaken in defense of U.S. homeland security, they simultaneously produce tremendous insecurity across scales, borders, and spaces. By tracing and unraveling the chaos interwoven with this insecurity, I reveal the disciplinary aims of the state, and I illustrate how detention and deportation work as mechanisms for projecting state power and maintaining control. Through this epistemological and methodological approach, chaos itself is shown to have outcomes that prove immensely beneficial to the state.

The chaos inherent to the detention and deportation system is, in part, evidence of its rapid expansion over the last two decades, significant shifts in law and policy, and a lack of central coordination and oversight. Importantly, however, the overall projection of chaos performs important functions, and in this sense, the chaos is quite intentional, or at least not undesired. The confusion and disorder projected by the system to non-immigrants effectively build on racialized ideas of criminality embedded in securitized narratives of migration. The chaotic, uneven operation of the system obscures the racist nature of immigration enforcement, the power of the immigration industrial complex,
inefficiency and waste within the system, and deplorable conditions of detention. The chaotic spatial and temporal geographies of migrants’ detention experiences serve to block detainees’ access to support networks, obscure alternatives to deportation, and discipline detainees to behave passively. The chaos is also intended to brand detainees’ bodies with a message of non-welcome to potential immigrants. The association of chaos with migrants, as directly tied to detention and deportation and more generally, also hides the mismatch between policy objectives and actual consequences – especially the negative outcomes of policies guided by the deterrence paradigm. Chaos thus works to conceal, to policymakers and the non-immigrant public, the relationship between international migration and U.S. policy as well as the structural reasons underlying human mobility.

It is worth noting that the precise way in which chaos is perceived depends on the viewer. To detainees, their family members, and others working on their behalf, the D & D system projects a chaos that makes the system seem disordered, unpredictable, and impenetrable. To the general American public, including system employees, any chaos perceived within the system works to confirm their perception of migrants as dangerous, different, and threatening to order. What’s more, the association of migrants with disorder and fear is seen as reaffirming the need for the D & D system.

Chaos is therefore doubly a tool of the state. It is, first, a central justification for and product of restrictive and punitive immigration enforcement policies. In other words, feelings of insecurity and fear regarding immigration (that migrants are criminal, dangerous, and immoral) generated among the American public by discourses of
homeland security are used to rationalize the building of the D & D system. Then, the resulting disorder and confusion projected by the chaotic system appears to substantiate negative scriptings of migrants as fearful bodies that must be contained and managed. The consequent insecurity and fear generated in countries of migrant origin also ensure a continued supply of migrants to fill U.S. labor needs and, not coincidentally, the D & D system. Second, chaos is instrumental in reaffirming state power. Paradoxically, despite and because of its chaotic geographies, the D & D system brings a sense of order and reason to the often disordered, contradictory discourses of homeland security and nation. Hernández (2008, 49) writes that by creating an illusion of security, “The detention of Latinos and other racialized immigrants helps constitute the normative white citizen and white nation. It, along with the government’s expansive immigration control apparatus, serves a disciplinary function that consolidates the power of the state and formulates US nationalism and sovereignty by constructing and controlling insiders and outsiders.” The chaos of the D & D system, I have shown, facilitates the conceptualization of immigrants as the opposite of the citizen, the other against whom national belonging is understood. That is, the D & D system, as a state apparatus, appears to provide order by drawing (barbed-wire) lines between citizen and outsider, thereby justifying the state’s existence and adding to its power. These chaotic geographies thus play an important role in the manufacture and reinforcement of a cohesive narrative of homeland, which has become a critical component in the manufacture of the state.

The intellectual act of tracing chaos illustrates how the state is multiply sited. The state is embodied by and in employees working to implement state policies, politicians
seeking favor with constituents, corporations wishing to make a profit, non-immigrants fearful of the racialized other, and migrants and their families in countries of migrant origin. There are many places, spaces, and bodies on which the state exercises control and which, in turn, give form to the state. Hansen and Stepputat (2001, 16) write,

As modern forms of governmentality penetrate and shape human life in unprecedented ways, the practices and sites of governance have also become ever more dispersed, diversified, and fraught with internal inconsistencies and contradictions. This has not necessarily weakened the state in terms of the capacity of policies and designs to create social effects. The strength of the modern state seems, on the contrary, to be its dispersion and ubiquity.

In the modern-day milieu of the multiply-sited state, the D & D system remains a powerful instrument, despite and because of its inherent disorder and confusion.

In the state’s dispersion and the contradictions it inevitably creates, however, are entry points for affecting change in the state and its policies. As Mountz (2003, 639; cf. Gupta 1995) asserts, “One political task at hand is to explore the inconsistencies in narratives and to seek within them ways to disrupt the most audible material political projects of the state.” By considering security at simultaneously transnational and local scales, I have endeavored to disrupt the hegemonic power of narratives of homeland security to shape public worldviews and influence contemporary policymaking in the United States. In pointing to contrasting experiences and understandings of insecurity, I
have illuminated some of the many ways in which the discourse of homeland security is troubled and paradoxical.

My cross-border, grounded approach to the geopolitics of immigration enforcement also contributes to the adoption of an alternative, human-centered idea of security. Nationalistic discourses of homeland security homogenize and dehumanize immigrants as foreign bodies out of place. They strip migrants of their histories, erase their familiar and community connections, and prevaricate motivations. Human security, as Hyndman (2004, 317) proposes, “potentially transposes security discourse to a finer scale at which smaller political constituencies and less powerful groups become visible and their freedom from fear a public matter of concern” (Hyndman 2004, 317; cf. Smith 2001). By tracing the embodied geopolitics of fear, I disrupt the “metanarratives” of “globalised fear” at the core of security-driven policies in the contemporary era (Pain 2009, 2010). By focusing on experiences of insecurity and fear particularly in countries of migrant origin, I emphasize that there are alternate understandings of security. In so doing, I call attention to the limits of the concept of homeland security and make space for new political projects.

An Agenda for Future Scholarship

In this final section, I sketch an agenda for new lines of inquiry in migration studies and political geography that have been opened by my dissertation. I begin by discussing scholarship needed specifically concerning international migration,
As stated in the Preface, in the course of my volunteer work at the Casa del Migrante, I realized that there are many other places in the world like Cuenca where detention and deportation produce a range of problems. This fact points to the need for more research to be conducted in countries of migrant origin. While there is a small but rich body of scholarship that elaborates the consequences of U.S. migration policies in Mexico and more proximate Central American countries, there is limited knowledge focusing on the impacts of U.S. policies in South American countries and more distant origin countries outside of the Western Hemisphere. While this study contributes toward filling that gap, additional attention to these lesser-studied places is essential. More information is needed regarding the increase or decrease in insecurities over time, additional consequences of forced return migration, and reverberations of detention and deportation beyond the experiences of deportees. Studies focusing on economic and cultural consequences of detention and deportation at the community, regional and national scales in countries of migrant origin are also called for. While my research in Ecuador suggests that the deterrence paradigm underlying detention and deportation is fatally flawed, future scholarship should assess if this is the case elsewhere, and endeavor to weigh the deterrent effect of restrictive policies against other consequences. Knowledge in all of these areas of study will be deepened and broadened through comparison of findings from the range of countries receiving deportees from the United
States as well as from other countries pursuing similar immigration enforcement strategies.

Additionally, this project points to the need for increased knowledge regarding the geopolitics and political economy of international human mobility. My data corroborate the findings of other scholars showing that more restrictive border controls contribute to the growth of human smuggling industries and increase the cost, risk, and time involved in unauthorized migration journeys. My data also adds to scholarship tracing the southward migration of U.S. border enforcement efforts across and beyond the borders of neighboring countries. More research is called for regarding how these arrangements across and between states influence individual migration decisions and experiences.

During my fieldwork in Ecuador, for example, it became clear that actors in the human smuggling networks orchestrating migrants’ journeys to the United States are acutely aware of the varying visa and entry requirements of countries along the way, and design migrants’ routes accordingly. Investigation combining an ethnographic approach with policy analysis in multiple states would yield useful information regarding the relationship between immigration policies, the geography of migrants’ journeys, and the political economy of smuggling.

Furthermore, my work challenges migration scholars and political geographers to consider new methodological strategies for studying policy. I have evaluated detention and deportation policies through attention to the structure, operation, and actors of the D & D system and attention to the consequences of the system in Ecuador. My approach, therefore, pushes migration scholars to consider ways in which immigration enforcement
policies work both in the destination country and the origin country. In addition, by pairing study of discourses and policies regarding immigration with attention to their consequences both inside and outside of the policymaking state’s borders, this research answers feminist political geographers’ calls to identify and scrutinize ways in which narratives crafted by elite actors shape lived realities, and to address how political power operates in everyday lives. I believe that the ethnographic tool of periscoping may serve other researchers in generating empirical data regarding the operation of political power in places often obscured, and to evaluate multiple scales at which political power takes form simultaneously. My use of cartography as a methodological tool for the study of policies may serve as an example for other scholars, too. Through visual representation, maps serve to make knowledge more widely accessible. My maps of detainees’ transfer paths, for instance, illustrate the disorder and inefficiency characteristic of the D & D system. I urge scholars to consider other ways in which cartography may be deployed in new research regarding detention, deportation and immigration enforcement more broadly.

Finally, by focusing on the stories and everyday experiences of people in countries of migrant origin, my work gives faces, families, and histories to migrants who were previously hollow, foreign, and dangerous bodies in the eyes of many North Americans. This approach creates conceptual space for attention to the structural reasons behind international human mobility, and thus makes available an alternative to popular tropes regarding migrants’ motivations for migration. I assert that more such scholarship is needed in order to shift stereotypes, discourses, and policies surrounding
undocumented migration, and to pull focus to the project of actually addressing the global inequalities driving international human mobility.
### APPENDIX A – LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEDPA</td>
<td>Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAP</td>
<td>Anti-Contraband Operative Unit <em>(Cuerpo Operativo Anti-Contrabando)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D &amp; D system</td>
<td>Detention and deportation system <em>(author’s term)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRO</td>
<td>Detention and Removal Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EORIR</td>
<td>Executive Office for Immigration Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICE</td>
<td>Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIRRIRA</td>
<td>Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INS</td>
<td>Immigration and Naturalization Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRCA</td>
<td>Immigration Reform and Control Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRTPA</td>
<td>Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPATS</td>
<td>Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTM</td>
<td>Other Than Mexican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCM</td>
<td>Regional Conference on Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENAMI</td>
<td>National Secretariat of the Migrant <em>(Secretaría Nacional del Migrante)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBI</td>
<td>Secure Border Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. CBP</td>
<td>United States Customs and Border Patrol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCG</td>
<td>United States Coast Guard</td>
</tr>
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</table>
APPENDIX B – MAP OF ECUADOR

Map Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin
APPENDIX C – TABLE: INTERVIEWED FUNCTIONARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Type of organization</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>National NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small town near Cuenca</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Catholic church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>Lawyer, program director</td>
<td>Federal government agency, regional branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Official</td>
<td>U.S. Embassy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>Case worker</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Law office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small city near Cuenca</td>
<td>Pastor &amp; Advisory board</td>
<td>Catholic organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Unit director</td>
<td>Federal government ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Unit director</td>
<td>Regional government agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Lawyer, program director</td>
<td>National NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Federal government agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Unit director</td>
<td>Federal government agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quenca</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Local association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Law office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Federal government agency, regional branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>Lawyer, Unit director</td>
<td>Federal government agency, regional branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Law office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Federal government agency, regional branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Federal government agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Program director</td>
<td>Federal government agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Federal government agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Federal government ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guayaquil</td>
<td>Lawyer, Administrator</td>
<td>Federal government agency, regional branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuenca</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## APPENDIX D – TABLE: INTERVIEWED DEPORTEEs, BASIC DATA

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender (F or M)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Caught border or interior</th>
<th>If interior, time in U.S.</th>
<th>Where lived in U.S.</th>
<th>Weeks detained</th>
<th>No. places detained</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jorge</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>border</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Juan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>interior</td>
<td>2 years</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 José Carlos</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>interior</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Faustino</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>interior</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Anderson</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>5 years</td>
<td>Chicago &amp; Minneapolis</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Pato</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>interior</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Saira</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>border</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Patricio</td>
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<td>interior</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Newark, NJ</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Oscar</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>8 years</td>
<td>New York City</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>10 Javier</td>
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<td>6 years</td>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>11 Daniela</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Johnny</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Clemente</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>11 years</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Julio</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Santiago</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Tulio</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>interior</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>New York City</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Joaquín</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>interior</td>
<td>4 years</td>
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<td>21 Tommy</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Chicago &amp; St. Louis</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>4.5 years</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>Pseudonym</td>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>Caught border or interior</td>
<td>If interior, time in U.S.</td>
<td>Where lived in U.S.</td>
<td>Weeks detained</td>
<td>No. places detained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>26 Franklin</td>
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<td>27 Juan Pablo</td>
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<td>7 years</td>
<td>Indianapolis, Chicago, &amp; New Jersey</td>
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<td>28 Diego</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>10 years</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 Sergio</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>30 Marcelo</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>31 Christian</td>
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<td>33 Geovanny</td>
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<td>9 years</td>
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<td>5.5</td>
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<td>35 Paúl</td>
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<td>interior</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>36 Carlos</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>interior</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>38 Iván</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>interior</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Danbury, CT</td>
<td>17</td>
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NOTES: If the interviewee had made previous migration journeys to the United States, the data here is for the most recent journey. The time detained does not include any time the detainee may have spent incarcerated prior to ICE custody.
Seudónimo: ____________________

**Datos básicos**
- edad
- de dónde en Ecuador? Barrio?
- educación? Trabajo en Ecuador?
- casado/a?
- qué era su estatus legal en los EEUU?
- hijos? Dónde están? Son ciudadanos estadounidenses?
- p/q decidió viajar a EEUU?
- cuántos viajes a EEUU?
- antes de viajar a EEUU, sabía de las prácticas de detención y deportación en EEUU?
- cuánto tiempo vivió en los EEUU?
- en qué trabajaba en EEUU?
- con qué frecuencia se comunicó con familiares en Ecuador?
- envió dinero?

**Circunstancias de captura**
- dónde: calle, trabajo, auto, transporte?
- p/q? por ser indocumentado? cargos especiales? En redada?
- por quién? Policía local, de estado, federal? De ICE?
- tratamiento por policía?
- en un cárcel normal antes de pasar a Migración?

**Experiencia de detención**
- dónde detenido primero?
- qué información recibió?
- representación legal? Experiencia en corte?
- pagó fianza? Se lo devolvieron la fianza?
- transferido a diferentes cárcel? Centros de detención? Transporte para transferencias?
- comunicación con otras personas? Familiares?
- duración de detención?
- cuidado médico?
- alimentación?
- qué hizo mientras detenido? Ejercicio? Trabajo?
- tratamiento por guardias, etc. en la cárcel? algún maltrato? Frustraciones?

**Proceso de deportación**
- información recibido?
- con qué anticipación sabía de la deportación?
- en un vuelo comercial? Del gobierno?
- experiencia del vuelo: tratamiento, en cadenas, tiempo?

**Al llegar en Ecuador**
-cómo era la recepción? Trámites en el aeropuerto? Tenía que hablar con SENAMI, Fiscalía, MMRREE, ICE?
-¿familiares esperando para Ud? Para otros deportados?
-¿adónde iban otros deportados? ¿Qué iban a hacer al salir del aeropuerto?
-¿al llegar, qué hizo Ud?
-¿cómo se sentía al llegar en Ecuador?
-¿qué hace ahora? Trabaja?
-¿piensa en regresar a los EEUU? p/q?

**Para terminar**
-¿dejó dinero u otras cosas en EEUU? Intentando recuperar?
-¿pensamientos sobre la experiencia de detención, deportación?
-¿Qué piensa ahora de los EEUU? Del ICE?
-¿en el proceso de detención, deportación, llegada al Ecuador, se sintió apoyado por el gobierno ecuatoriano? Piensa que hay más que el gobierno ecuatoriano debía haber hecho?
-¿conocen a otras personas deportados varias veces? otros casos particulares de los cuales quieres hablar?


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