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¿Bienvenidos a Casa?
Deportation and the Making of Home in the U.S.-El Salvador Transnation

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Mary Kathleen Dingeman-Cerda

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Rubén G. Rumbaut, Chair
Professor Jennifer Lee
Professor Susan Bibler Coutin

2014

DEDICATION

‘Who are all those friends, all scattered like dry leaves?’

- Woody Guthrie

"Deportee" (also known as Plane Wreck at Los Gatos)

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the migrants whose lives are forgotten and voices are silenced by our contemporary deportation machinery.

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Critical research funding was provided in the form of a Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant by the National Science Foundation, a Human Rights Fellowship through the Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and seed money from Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at the University of California, Los Angeles and the Centers for Global Peace and Conflict Studies and Law, Society, and Culture at the University of California, Irvine. Writing was made possible by the Fletcher Jones Foundation, the Division of Social Sciences, and the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Irvine.

I am forever indebted to my mentors. I hit the jackpot when Rubén G. Rumbaut agreed to be my advisor. It was his work that first inspired my academic interest in migration. It was he who encouraged me when I timidly solicited opinions about tracking the experiences of deportees. He demonstrates to me that is possible to blend academia with an ardent passion for social justice. He has become my role model, my collaborator, and my cheerleader. He helped me to develop my confidence, my voice. He always encouraged me to carve my own professional identity rather than follow his path or any other scholar's standards. Thank you, Rubén, for your sage advice and for your friendship. I would not have produced this project, or any future project, without you.

Susan Bibler Coutin was also critically influential. Like many migrants represented in her work, I had no ties to El Salvador prior to graduate school. Susan introduced me to El Salvador and trained me in data collection and analysis. She invited me to shadow her on a series of focus groups she conducted with deported persons and later permitted me to use this data in this dissertation. She

introduced me to many of her contacts who, in turn, provided me access to interviewees. She shared her interview schedule and her method of data analysis. She offered to co-author a book chapter, providing a model of efficient and effective collaboration. She listened and provided guidance as I navigated graduate school as a woman and a mother. She is an example that is possible to balance a successful career, a happy family, and personal wellness. Thank you, Susan.

Numerous organizations also assisted with this project. El Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad provided a homestay and Spanish and history lessons in El Salvador. It was through them that I met Cristy Ayala. Cristy provided access to deportees throughout the Salvadoran countryside. She transported me to interviews and shared knowledge about the history and dynamics of the communities we visited. She offered critical interpretation services during interviews with Spanish speakers. Cristy also conducted a series of seven interviews and transcribed ten interviews for me. Perhaps most importantly, Cristy provided me with friendship and a sense of belonging in a foreign world. Her assistance was indispensable and her generosity of heart is unforgettable.

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A team of masters and undergraduate level research assistants provided assistance with interview transcriptions, data entry, and coding of interviews. Carlos Batres became the natural leader of the team. He transcribed interviews, coded data, and helped me develop insights for the

project during meetings and lengthy email memos and conversations. Carlos' involvement in the project granted me important 'insider' knowledge to Latino culture that would have otherwise been lacking. His interpretations of the data enriched my analysis beyond measure. I am incredibly thankful for his dedication and his friendship. Other members of the research team at various stages of the project included Melissa Mae Cruz, Jorge Antonio Cruz, Monica Sepulveda, Jennifer Trinh, Diana Guerrero, Julio Rosas, Vanessa Velador, Carol Linton, Katherine Carranza, and Emily McLaughlin. I am thankful to each of them for their unique contributions.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family. Mom and dad, you have always been my number one fans. You sacrificed in innumerable ways to make my dreams come to fruition. You never stopped supporting me. When the road was tough and it seemed like everything would unravel, you were always there to reassure and encourage me. Thank you, dad, for demonstrating to me what it means to follow a passion, build community, and live a life of conviction. Thank

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I wish to offer my gratitude to my husband, Michel, for supporting me in this endeavor. You patiently stood by my side, never waning, through all of the ups and downs of writing a dissertation. You challenged me to be my best and always reminded me not to take myself so seriously. You who kept me sane. Thank you for your love and your friendship; for turning my life into an adventure, full of wonder and surprise. Thank you also to Mirelsa, Javier, Sandra, Miguel, and Yadira for taking care of us when we needed you most.

Sweet Dylan, *mi patito lindo*, you are my inspiration. You are becoming such a generous, curious, playful, and funny little man. I am so lucky to share my journey with you. Thank you for filling my days with enthusiasm and love. *Te quiero, te amo, y más!*

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

¿Bienvenidos a Casa?

Deportation and the Making of Home in the U.S.-El Salvador Transnation

By

Mary Kathleen Dingeman-Cerda

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2014

Professor Rubén G. Rumbaut, Chair

This dissertation fills a gap in migration literature by analyzing the question of coerced return. It uncovers the conditions under which individuals deported from the U.S. feel like they have been warmly accepted “home” or have been marginalized and made to feel like strangers in their native country. It draws upon an ethnographic case study of El Salvador. Findings are informed by an inductive analysis of 100 life-history interviews with Salvadoran deportees, as well as observations in nonprofit organizations in Los Angeles and El Salvador and 20 unstructured interviews with experts on Salvadoran migration and deportation. It brings together literature on the meanings of ‘home,’ as well as immigrant incorporation and return migrant reintegration. It seeks to understand not only how contemporary deportation law impacts lives but how deportees make sense of their realities and adjust their behaviors to establish a sense of belonging upon return.

The dissertation shows that post-deportation trajectories—the degree and ways of being embedded in El Salvador after return—are varied, non-linear, and sometimes paradoxical. They are determined by an interaction of deportees’ personal characteristics and the trans/national and

local levels contexts to which they return. In El Salvador, the context of return is experienced differently depending upon deportees' degree of acculturation in the U.S. versus El Salvador. Individuals with high levels of identification and affiliation with El Salvador—Salvadoran nationals—were more likely to experience a return 'homecomings,' but they maintained low levels of economic embeddedness. Conversely, U.S. nationals who grew up or spent significant time in the U.S. experienced removal as banishment from the 'homes' they built in the U.S. They were constructed as foreigners and as threats to national security in El Salvador and were thus regulated to socially and economically marginal positions. Persons with gang histories or who were presumed to have them were highly stigmatized and criminalized. They were also targets of state surveillance, police abuse, and violence from gangs. Though all deportees employed coping and homemaking strategies, those who were more socially accepted were more likely to claim El Salvador as their 'home.'

CHAPTER 1

A Nation of Immigrants to Deportation Nation

“America is a trope for inclusion. It is also a trope for exclusion.”
– Cyrus Patell (n.d.)

The United States has proudly and consistently declared itself a nation of immigrants. The Statue of Liberty, whom Emma Lazarus referred to as the Mother of Exiles, welcomes the tired, poor, and huddled masses to the mighty and mythological land called America. The monument offers a promise that the world’s homeless, wretched refuse, and tempest-tost may finally breathe free in the land of the free and home of the brave. Celebrating this immigrant heritage, Oscar Handlin (1951) once wrote “I once thought to write a history of immigrants in America. I discovered that the immigrants *were* American history.” John F. Kennedy concurred that “every American who ever lived, with the exception of one group, was either an immigrant himself or a descendant of immigrants” (1964:2). Citing Alexis de Tocqueville, Kennedy claimed that the “secret of America” was in its diverse and intrepid people. He believed it to be a nation of risk-takers who “dared to explore new frontiers” and “build new lives for themselves in a spacious society that did not restrict freedom of choice and action” (1964:2).

The master narrative of the United States as a nation of immigrants implies that the “absorbent magic” of a single “melting pot” grants immigrants and their descendants membership into a unified national community and the ability to achieve upward economic mobility (Rumbaut 2005:154; Takaki 2008). Such was the case for large waves of early European immigrants—such as Irish, Italians, Germans, and Jews—who, in general, overcame initial hurdles and were absorbed into the so-called “twilight of ethnicity,” in which racial differences diminished in importance (Alba 1985). Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries,

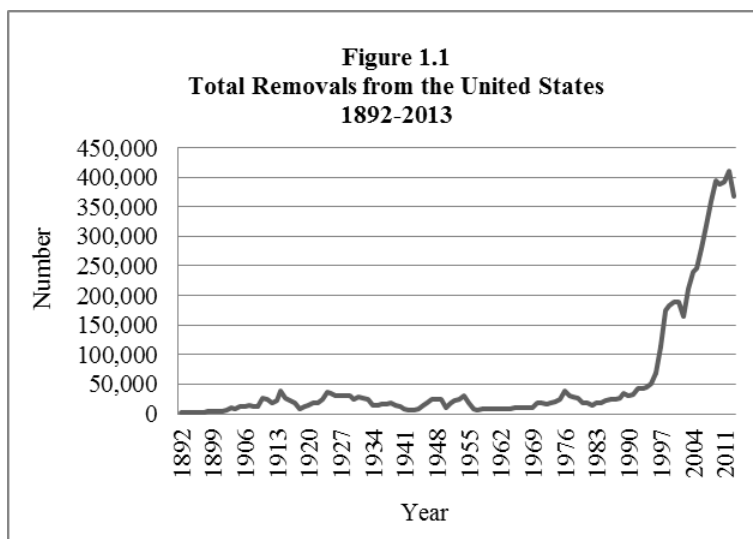
however, the degree of one's "whiteness" has become confounded with what it meant to be fully "American" (Takaki 2008). Groups whose phenotypes, cultural practices, class statuses, and political ideologies were seen as incompatible with the dominant group have been framed as threats to economic progress, national security, and cultural longevity. Groups considered problematic have been systematically marginalized, excluded, and removed from U.S. territory (Kanstroom 2007; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

Critical race scholars have exposed the universally attainable "American Dream" as an aspirational myth; a trope for the ambivalence that truly surrounds immigration and immigrant inclusion in the U.S. By documenting the dynamic interplay between inclusionary and exclusionary practices, this work has rectified egregious omissions in the historical record. It nevertheless continues to be afflicted with a sort of "methodological nationalism" that assumes the "nation/state/society [as] the natural social and political form of the modern world" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002:302). However, the majority of researchers continue to "fall into the trap of unconsciously defining subjects in national terms" (Fitzgerald 2006:2). Moreover, a scholarly preoccupation with understanding the so-called "entry-side" of immigration law and the process of immigrant incorporation in the U.S. has meant that questions of "ex-corporation" outside of the physical territory of the U.S. are only beginning to be examined (Aleinikoff and Rumbaut 1998; Peutz 2006; Zolberg 2006).

This dissertation seeks to understand the U.S. immigrant experience through an analysis of the "ex-corporation," trajectories deportees formally removed from U.S. society and forced to return to their country of citizenship in El Salvador. It applies a transnational framework to understand whether deportees experience their lives post-deportation as a warm return "home" to a site of perceived belonging, or as an exile from the "homes" they established abroad in the U.S.

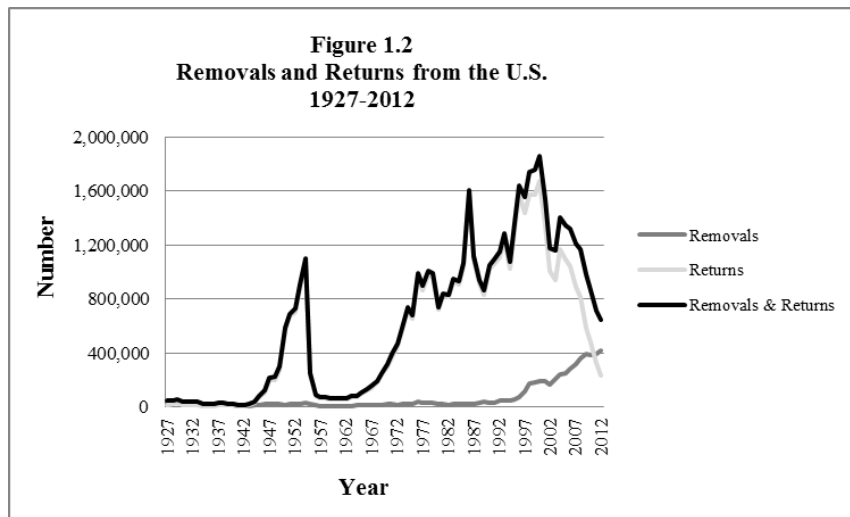
It uncovers the degree to which and conditions under which deportees feel like members of the country of their birth and citizenship. It not only works to understand the factors behind various post-deportation trajectories in El Salvador, but also addresses how deportees interpret and respond their post-deportation lives, a process referred to as “homemaking” (Hammond 2004). In sum, the dissertation seeks to better understand the human impact of U.S. deportation laws, the process of deportee reintegration in El Salvador, and the transnational effects of the U.S. and El Salvador as simultaneously inclusive and exclusive—or bulimic (Young 1999)—societies.

The Deportation Regime



In recent decades the U.S. has witnessed the rise of a “modern deportation regime” (Peutz and De Genova 2010). Restrictive immigration policies have a long and storied history in the U.S., from the Alien and Sedition Acts at the turn of the 19th century to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Palmer Raids of the 1920s, the National Origins Quota Act of 1924, the Mexican Repatriation of the 1930s, Operation Wetback in 1954, and so on (Kanstroom 2007). This period is unprecedented, however, in the degree of border militarization, internal

enforcement, and the increasingly standardized use of immigration and criminal laws to manage undesirable migration (Kanstroom 2012). Numbers of removal of unauthorized migrants and non-citizens convicted of deportable offenses have escalated to levels unparalleled in U.S. history—up 724 percent between 1995 (50,924) and 2013 (368,644) (Simanski and Sapp 2013; USDHS 2013). See Figure 1.1.



Observers have noted that nearly two million removals have occurred under President Obama, more than any administration in U.S. history (Lind 2014). There has also been some concern, however, that pro-immigration activists, academics, and the media have exaggerated Obama’s deportation record. Because “deportation” is no longer an official legal term, Goodman (2014) recommends distinguishing between “removals” and “returns.” Since 1996, the federal government has defined *removal* as “the compulsory and confirmed movement of an inadmissible or deportable alien out of the United States based on an order of removal.” Until recently, removals were adjudicated in immigration courts by judges; and they typically entailed lengthy and costly detention stays. They carry 5- to 20-year bans on re-entry with associated

threats of federal incarceration if a deportee is found residing in the U.S. post-removal. *Return*, on the other hand, refers to “the confirmed movement of an inadmissible or deportable alien out of the United States not based on an order of removal.” Sometimes called “voluntary departures,” returns replaced the former “catch-and-release” practice of sending immigrants back across the U.S.-Mexico border after apprehension. Returns are typically instigated by immigration officers rather than judges. Unlike removals, they do not carry bans on re-entry or the threat of incarceration. Goodman (2014) shows that once returns are added to removal figures, there appears to be an overwhelming *decline* in total deportations since President Obama took office. Under this logic the deportation regime reached its height under George W. Bush. See Figure 1.2.

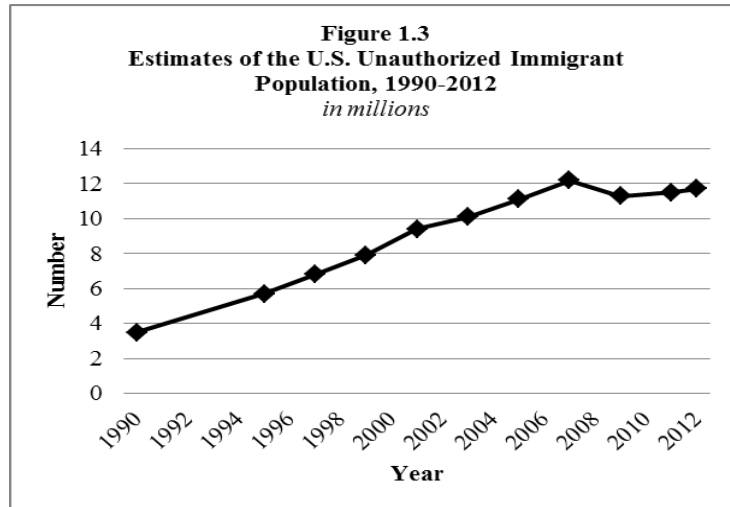
In the absence of more nuanced data, removals and returns are increasingly difficult to distinguish. Border crossers who might have qualified for catch-and-release prior to 2006 are often criminalized by officials exercising prosecutorial discretion. Though these individuals may be similar to migrants who qualify for return, they are rolled into removal statistics as a result of their criminalization. Removal has also become deformed in ways that make it look like return in practice. Most migrants undergoing removal today never actually see a judge. They are often processed in groups and are asked to agree to the charges against them and to sign orders of removal. Most migrants agree without ever seeing an attorney. They avoid lengthy detention stays and quickly return to their countries-of-citizenship, much like most returnees. The clearest difference between removals and returns thus becomes whether or not migrants were charged with a crime and given a ban on re-entry.

Though there is logic to combining return and removal, it is misleading to assess the scope of the deportation regime this way alone. Returns, which have historically greatly

surpassed removals, are correlated with border apprehensions and apprehensions have historically been closely linked to labor migration, especially from Mexico. This is supported by the fact that, between 2009 and 2012, nearly the entire drop in returns was attributed to a decline in the apprehension and return of Mexican nationals. Apprehensions of Mexicans declined from 715,896 in 2003 to 448,697 in 2012 (USDHS 2013). The number of returned Mexicans dropped from 468,722 to 131,818 between 2009 and 2012 (USDHS 2013). Most of the decline in returns can be thus attributed to lower rates of unauthorized immigration from Mexico, especially since the Great Recession (Lind 2014). The rest of the decline seems to reflect the Obama Administration's practice of offering relief from removal for more desirable or politically advantageous groups, while criminalizing and making removable those considered less desirable or politically advantageous.

Removals most clearly “tell the story of the deliberate policy choices made over the last decade,” and are thus a better measure of the modern deportation regime than returns (Lind 2014). Not only are removals on the rise, but their consequences are more punitive than any period in U.S. history. This chapter will review how the deportation regime arose, what political and economic functions it serves, and its impact on individuals, families, and communities in the U.S. and abroad. It argues that deportees' subjective experiences are too often silenced in discourse around immigration reform in the U.S. Their narratives offer great insight into how the modern deportation regime functions and suggestions on how to build a proportionate and effective system capable of restoring—indeed, celebrating—the U.S. immigrant heritage.

The Legal Construction of Immigrant ‘Illegality’



Because international law provides states with the sovereign right to control their territories and determine the membership of their nations, deportation has rarely been problematized. It is widely perceived to be an individualized administrative practice designed to expel migrants who have violated the “rule of law” within a nation-state (Kanstroom 2012). Restrictionism is thus often considered the natural response to an otherwise uncontrollable flow of migrants who unlawfully crossed borders and remained in the country without permission. It is in fact the case that the unauthorized migrant population and the deportation regime have grown alongside each another. In 1990, when removals were comparatively minimal, approximately 3.5 million persons lived in the U.S. without authorization. By 2012, when removals were at their highest, the unauthorized population had more than tripled to 11.7 million. See Figure 3. Latin American countries with the largest unauthorized populations also receive the most deportees from the U.S. each year. In 2012, Mexico received 306,870 deportees, Guatemala received 38,677, Honduras received 31,515, and El Salvador received 18,677 (USDHS 2013).

These figures provide a compelling explanation for the rise of the modern deportation regime. Yet they ignore the fact that an increasing number of persons with legal status are also commonly removed after they committed offenses considered “deportable.” They also ignore the ways in which the U.S. has historically constructed the state of “illegality.” Ngai (2004) argues that the *National Origins Quota Act* of 1924 essentially “created” the “illegal alien.” It and its precursor established strict nationality- and race-based restrictions on entry and utilized a system of documents to enforce them. The border patrol was also created in 1924 to prevent smuggling and unauthorized entry, largely along the U.S.-Mexico border. “Illegality” was later re-produced under the *Hart-Cellar Act* of 1965. The law ushered in a new era of immigrant expansionism that continues in the U.S. today by replacing the national quota system with a preference system that prioritized employment and family ties. It also implemented hemispheric quotas on the number of people legally permitted to enter the U.S. given year. This was the first time a quota was placed on immigration from Latin America—and it failed to consider the high volume of circular migration that took place in the region. Demand to enter the U.S. from Mexico and Central America exceeded avenues to lawfully enter, so the undocumented population naturally grew.

By 1986, the unauthorized population had reached between 3 and 5 million people. The *Immigrant Responsibility and Control Act* (IRCA) was a bipartisan effort designed to reduce the size of the population and gain control of the southwestern border. It regularized the status of approximately 2.7 million people, increased border surveillance, and required employers to verify their employees’ authorization to work. Because entire segments of the U.S. economy had grown reliant on unauthorized labor, employer sanctions were never fully enforced. ‘Workers and their employers had little trouble adapting to the new rules of the immigrant enforcement game’ (Andreas 2000:39). The counterfeiting industry exploded as migrants needed social

security numbers to secure employment (Tumulty 2013). The law failed to address inequality in the Americas that historically contributed to immigration to the U.S. It failed to increase hemispheric quotas on legal migration. Pointing to the indeterminacies of law (Cabot 2010), it ultimately inspired *more* people to immigrate, especially from Mexico and Central America, to reunite with family members were more firmly settled in the country. Far from preventing future undocumented migration, the law is frequently blamed for contributing to its *growth*.

Perhaps the greatest contributor to the rise of undocumented immigration to the U.S. was the passage of the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) in 1994. NAFTA was designed to more easily facilitate the flow of goods and commodities between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, by reducing “artificial barriers to trade.” Though some claimed it would reduce unauthorized immigration to the U.S., the opposite has been the case. Golash-Boza (2009) explains how this occurred.

First of all, NAFTA has had a devastating effect on the profitability of agriculture in Mexico. The entry of heavily subsidized U.S. corn and other products into the Mexican market has made it unprofitable to grow corn in Mexico, and around two million Mexicans have been forced out of agriculture. These former peasants often move to cities to work, and, from there, many migrate to the United States. Second, NAFTA created favorable conditions in Mexico for large transnational retail corporations such as Wal-Mart, which forced many smaller businesses to close. These former entrepreneurs are also often potential migrants. Finally, NAFTA has resulted in the reduction of wages along the Mexican border (Bybee and Winter 2006). When workers are earning lower than the subsistence level, they are more likely to send a family member abroad to work or to migrate themselves in order to survive (Lopez 2007).

These three factors cumulatively increased the likelihood of immigration from Mexico and Central America to the U.S. They worked in conjunction with hemispheric quotas on legal arrivals and backlogs on legal entry sometimes more than twenty-years long, resulting in millions of unlawful entries in the U.S. The unauthorized population thus continued to grow alongside the deportation regime, until 2008, when the Great Recession reduced labor demand in

the U.S. It appears, then, that the greatest deterrent for unauthorized migration is the state of the U.S. economy, not the size of its enforcement budget.

The Construction of the Deportation Regime

Just as migrant “illegality” was socially constructed throughout history, so too is the deportation regime. Deportation is a practice rooted in problematic forms of expulsion such as political exile, the transportation of criminals and sexual deviants, and ethnic cleansing (Walters 2002). Today’s removal tactics are tied to a long history of immigration, criminal, and national security policies that privilege certain categories of citizens and migrants at the expense of the exclusion and expulsion of others. The U.S. historically denied entry or forcefully expelled those who held political ideologies, class standings, criminal backgrounds, and personality characteristics considered incompatible with its imagined national community. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, the U.S. forcefully removed Native Americans from their land, transported and banished fugitive slaves to West Africa and Central America, systematically forbade Chinese workers from legally entering the country, relocated “poor and degenerate” persons throughout the country, and deported prostitutes, striking workers, and other persons considered to be “anarchists,” “radicals,” “convicts,” “lunatics,” or “idiots” (Kanstroom 2007; Ngai 2004; Sherwood 1916).

The rise of the modern deportation regime at the end of the 20th century is a direct outgrowth of the decline of the social welfare state in the late-1970s. The neoliberal model that emerged in its wake requires individuals and families to take upon themselves the responsibility of insuring against risk (Rose 1999). Proper “neoliberal citizens” adapt an entrepreneurial spirit and utilize market mechanisms to protect themselves from illness, unemployment, and other

hardships. Those unable to adapt in this way are seen as “anti-citizens” who threaten the security and quality of life of the privileged (Simon 2007). Under the new “culture of control” that emerged to protect neoliberal citizens from risky others, the state began to increasingly “govern through crime” (Garland 2001; Simon 2007). The U.S. has become hyper-securitized to provide “safe, orderly, and secure environments” for those who can afford them (Inda 2011:76). Meanwhile, the wars on crime and drugs transformed poor Black and Latino males into the principal objects of surveillance and policing (Waquant 2009). A booming prison-industrial complex emerged to contain these undesirable persons—and has since grown reliant on their continued criminalization. The impact has been atrocious in many poor communities, but the “containment of the few” continues to be seen as “a prerequisite for the freedoms of the many” (Inda 2011:76).

The wars on crime and drugs ultimately led to today’s war on unauthorized immigration. A national moral panic around immigration from Latin America began in the 1980s leading up to IRCA. The disappointments associated with its perceived failure ultimately “helped set the stage for the intense anti-immigrant backlash in the early 1990s—with the southwestern border becoming a focus point of media scrutiny, political debate, and public outrage” (Andreas 2000:39). Xenophobic rhetoric, especially toward Mexican immigrants, accelerated throughout the 1990s and intensified following September 11, 2001 (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Welch 2002). Whole categories of persons have been cast as “illegals,” “criminals,” and “terrorists” encroaching on the sacred space of the homeland. Immigrants are believed to steal citizens’ jobs, drain state services, and carry drugs and violence to the country. Some even believe Mexicans are orchestrating a *Reconquista* of the Southwest via uncontrolled migration and fertility (Chavez 2008). Meanwhile, neoliberal economic policies and national ideologies of

upward economic mobility—especially the “American Dream”—continue to disrupt rural communities in the developing world, inspiring people to risk their lives, families, and property to migrate to the U.S.

Unable to adequately control such elusive threats, state actors have capitalized on the logic of securitization (Bigo 2002). They have militarized territorial borders, criminalized and warehoused migrants, increased state and local involvement in interior enforcement, and deformalized removal in ways that deny migrants due process. Such modes of ‘governing immigration through crime’ created a thriving, but state dependent, immigration-industrial complex. They also have helped turn the U.S. into a “fortified enclave of sorts,” while unequally targeting Latino and Arab-Muslim males for detention and removal (Inda 2006; see also Bender 2002; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Ramirez, Hoopes, and Quinlan 2003). Though they often create the problem they are meant to resolve, such practices allow the government to give off the impression that it is “doing something” about unauthorized immigration and crime (Andreas 2000). They exemplify the neoliberal nexus of securitized nationalism and free-market capitalism in which the politically problematic are policed to provide proper citizens living in exclusionary societies a sense of security in an increasingly de-territorialized world.

Border Militarization

The most visual instantiation of the deportation regime is the militarization of territorial borders. Border militarization was first instituted with *Operation Gatekeeper* in 1993. It was intended to secure the San Diego portion of the southwestern border from unauthorized migration, trafficking of drugs, weapons, and persons, and gangs. It was responsible for the doubling of enforcement funding (from \$400 million to \$800 million), border patrol agents (from

4,200 to 9,212), and fencing between 1994 and 1997 (Nevins 2010). Such impressive increases were reinforced by the *Secure Borders Initiative* (SBI). Between 2005 and 2009, the SBI provided the Boeing Corporation a \$3.7 billion contract to implement advanced surveillance technology along the Mexican and Canadian borders. It included a \$1 billion virtual fence that was to survey 53 miles of the Arizona border. Both programs led to the ominous-sounding *Operation Endgame*. Endgame was a multi-year strategic plan between 2003 and 2012 to apprehend and deport *all* removable immigrants and suspected terrorists living in the U.S. It doubled the border patrol, increasing the number of agents to over 21,000 in 2013 (Kessler 2011; U.S.DHS 2012).

These efforts have failed to reduce the size of the undocumented population, yet the fiscal expansion of border enforcement continues to grow unabated. After Endgame was declared a failure, “immigration officials set a goal of 400,000 [removals] a year—a number that was scrawled on a whiteboard at their Washington headquarters” (Thompson and Cohen 2014). To that end, funding for *Immigration and Customs Enforcement* (ICE) and *Customs and Border Protection* (CBP) remains a top priority. In FY 2012, an extraordinary \$18 billion was spent on immigration enforcement funding, more than all other major federal enforcement agencies combined (Meissner, Kerwin, Chishti, and Bergeron 2013; Preston 2013). The President’s Budget for FY 2013 provides an additional \$11.9 billion to CBP and \$5.6 billion to ICE. This is 2 percent lower than the previous year’s enacted budget, but remains high enough to ‘continue the Administration’s unprecedented focus on border security, travel and trade’ (USDHS 2013:14). If Senate Bill 744 were to become law, \$30 billion would be provided to double Border Patrol agents (up to a startling 38,405), \$8 billion will be used to complete and reinforce

a 700-mile pedestrian border fence, and another \$4.5 billion will be spent on high-tech surveillance technology (Wylter 2013).

The CrImmigration Crisis

Another tactic implemented to grow and sustain the deportation regime is the criminalization of border crossers and non-citizens who violent the implicit terms of their membership (Kanstroom 2007; Motomura 2006). Immigrants tend to come to the U.S. to build successful lives for themselves and their families, not to get involved in delinquent behavior. Research consistently shows that immigrants are *less* likely to engage in criminal behavior than natives (Martinez and Lee 2000; Rumbaut and Ewing 2007). Immigration also appears to contribute to an overall *reduction* in crime rates at national, state, and local levels (Lee and Martinez 2009; Rumbaut 2009; Sampson 2008). Nevertheless, politicians and the media continue to draw upon the erroneous link between immigration and crime (Chavez 2008; Rumbaut 2009). In one example, former *Law & Order* star and Republican presidential candidate Fred Thompson advocated for immigration restrictions by claiming that “twelve million illegal immigrants later, we are now living in a nation that is beset by people who are suicidal maniacs and want to kill countless innocent men, women and children around the world.” (Rumbaut 2009:136). Xenophobic rhetoric such this this employs any existing immigrant and ethnic “gang bangers,” “suicidal maniacs,” “terrorists,” and “criminals” to justify the wholesale expansion of the deportation regime.

Meanwhile, the state increasingly criminalizes civil offenses and low-level crimes committed by immigrants. According to Chacón (2012:614), “our immigration policy provides a paradigmatic example of *overcriminalization*, whereby governments—both state and local—are

creating too many crimes and criminaliz[ing] things that properly should not be crimes” [emphasis added]. The “crimmigration crisis,” as it is now called (Stumpf 2008), originated with IRCA in 1986. A little acknowledged provision of the law required the Attorney General to deport “as expeditiously as possible” any non-citizen convicted of a removable offense (Inda 2013). Such offenses—known as “aggravated felonies”—were codified by the *Anti-Drug Abuse Act* of 1988. They initially included “murder, any drug trafficking crime, or illegal trafficking in firearms or destructive devices” (Rosenblum and Kandel 2011). The category expanded several times throughout the early 1990s and non-citizens convicted of a criminal sentence of five-years or more became classified as aggravated felons subject to removal.

In 1996, the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* (IIRIRA) and the *Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act* (AEDPA) became law. They redefined ‘aggravated felony’ under immigration law once again, mandating that any crime with a minimum sentence of one year or more, including misdemeanors, become grounds for removal (Morawetz 2000). The list of offenses included bribery, car theft, counterfeiting, drug possession, drug addiction, forgery, perjury, petty theft, prostitution, shoplifting, battery, tax evasion, and unlawful re-entry following deportation (Inda 2013:298). The two laws were applied retroactively, such that individuals who completed criminal sentences prior to 1996 were suddenly deportable and subject to formal 5- to 20-year bans on lawful re-entry. Judicial discretion was eliminated, so immigration judges were prohibited from considering factors such as migrants’ age at migration, family relations, and positive societal contributions in their removal decisions. Judicial review was also significantly limited, so deportable non-citizens were left without realistic chances to appeal their sentences, especially from abroad (Morawetz 2000).

After September 11th, 2001, the crimmigration campaign intensified under national security rhetoric. Thousands of non-citizens of Arab and Muslim descent were apprehended, screened, detained, and removed in the immediate aftermath of the attack (Chishti and Bergeron 2011; Ramirez et al. 2003). In 2003, the *Department of Homeland Security* claimed jurisdiction over immigration enforcement. Since then, immigration continues to be governed through crime. The *287(g) program*, first formed under IIRIRA in 1996, trained state and local law enforcement agents to enforce federal immigration law, permitting them to arrest and detain individuals suspected of unauthorized presence. The *Criminal Alien Program*, established in 2006, is responsible for screening potentially deportable non-citizens in jail. *Secure Communities*, piloted in 2008, has now replaced most 287g partnerships. It utilizes biometric data to locate deportable immigrants in participating local and state jails. It also permits jails to issue immigration ‘detainers,’ which authorize the transfer of deportable migrants into ICE custody. Anti-gang policing initiatives such as *Operation Community Shield* have served to reinforce these other efforts by identifying for removal suspected members of gangs like the Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13).

Obama recently claimed that the government prioritizes the removal of “criminals, gang bangers, [and] people who are hurting the community, not after students, not after folks who are here just because they’re trying to figure out how to feed their families” (Thompson and Cohen 2014). However, of the non-citizens currently being deported as “criminal aliens,” most are low-level, non-violent offenders (Inda 2013:300). A frequently cited Human Rights Watch (2009) report found that 72 percent of removals between 1997 and 2007 were for immigration offenses and non-violent criminal offenses. Only 14 percent involved violence against persons. A recent New York Times analysis likewise found that two-thirds of the persons removed under the

Obama Administration committed non-violent offenses or had no criminal record (Thompson and Cohen 2014). Twenty percent of removals were due to crimes classified as “serious,” such as drug offenses and crimes involving violence. The largest increase in “criminal” removals was for traffic violations, including driving while impaired. The second-largest increase was for migrants who re-entered the country unlawfully post-removal, a “crime” that was a civil offense prior to 1996. By 2013, unlawful re-entry charges were filed more than 90 percent of the time. They are also responsible for the greatest increase in convictions in federal courts since the 1990s (Light et al. 2014).

The Deformalization of Removal

Former DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano once argued “not only do we have an obligation to secure our borders, we have a responsibility to do so in the most cost-effective way possible” (Hsu 2010). To accomplish this while also meeting heightened annual detention and removal quotas, the state has deformalized the process of removal (Kanstroom 2012). In the past, removals took place after immigrants pled their cases in court. They were able to argue for cancellation of removal or other avenues to legalize. New methods of removal take place outside of the courtroom, reducing court backlogs and costly detention stays. Immigration enforcement officers are armed with prosecutorial discretion to help determine whether deportable migrants should appear in court for removal proceedings. Those not referred typically undergo: 1) expedited removal, 2) administrative removal, 3) reinstatement of removal, 4) stipulated orders of removal, or 5) administrative voluntary returns (Kanstroom 2012).

Under *expedited removal* a formal order of removal is provided to migrants without ever seeing an immigration judge if they, “cannot establish to the ‘satisfaction’ of an immigration

officer that they have been physically present in the United States for at least fourteen days” (Kanstroom 2012:65). *Administrative removal* issues a formal order of deportation if a migrant committed an “aggravated felony.” Upon serving their criminal sentence, individuals in this situation are transferred to immigration detention and deported without seeing an immigration judge. *Reinstatement of removal* allows the government to quickly remove at any time a migrant who has unlawfully re-entered the country after a previous removal. Under *stipulated orders of removal* apprehended migrants agree to the charges of removability, waive the right to appeal, and are swiftly deported. *Administrative voluntary return* is offered to individuals who are apprehended by immigration officials, waive their right to contest their removal, and agree to pay the cost of their return. Unlike under removal, returnees are granted up to 120 days to depart and there is no formal ban on their legal re-entry to the U.S. (Kanstroom 2012).

To facilitate deformed removals, the U.S. implemented *Operation Streamline* and the *Fast Track* program. The government authorizes the Border Patrol, in conjunction with federal courts and attorneys, to charge and prosecute up to 40 immigrants with deportable offenses—typically unlawful re-entry or identity fraud—at the same time (Rosenblum 2013). Prior to 2004, these programs operated in districts along the southwest border, but they now are now used throughout the country, especially during workplace raids (Camayd-Freixas 2013). Immigrants typically plead guilty to the charges against them in order to avoid lengthy detention stays and to return swiftly to their countries-of-citizenship. According to a Pew Hispanic Report, Streamline alone accounted for nearly half (45%) of all federal immigration-related prosecutions in Southwest border districts between 2005 and 2012 (Rosenblum 2013).

Critics are concerned that the deformed removal denies migrants their constitutional right to due process. Individuals in removal proceedings are granted the right to an

attorney but they often sign removal documents without legal guidance because it is not provided to them. About 95 percent of people who agreed to deformed removals between 1999 and 2009 did so without legal counsel (Gorman 2009). For many apprehended migrants, the documents they sign are only offered in English and they are denied adequate translation assistance. (American Immigration Counsel 2012) Moreover, the American Immigration Counsel (2012) claims that “CBP officers do not always provide noncitizens with information regarding the consequences of accepting voluntary return and in some cases even compel them to “agree” to “voluntarily” depart. Consequently, individuals who accept voluntary departure may be forced to relinquish claims for legal status in the U.S. or become barred from lawfully reentering the United States for up to ten years.” The same appears to be true with expedited, stipulated, and administrative removals (Gorman 2009; Kanstroom 2012). In these ways the deformed removal becomes a coercive, extralegal state practice in need of reform.

The Immigration-Industrial Complex

The deportation regime serves an important economic function. According to Justin Akers Chacón and Mike Davis (2006) “border enforcement has become a profitable enterprise.” Much like military interventions maintain a “military-industrial complex” (Eisenhower 1961) and high levels of incarceration maintain a “prison-industrial complex” (Davis 1995, Davis 1998), border militarization and the crimmigration crisis have given rise to an “immigration-industrial complex” (Golash-Boza 2009). This industry sustains an impressive force of governmental employees at federal, state, and local levels charged with managing all aspects of apprehension, detention, and removal. It is also an important source of revenue for private corporations and their employees, especially in technology, transportation, and securitization.

The government frequently contracts defense companies and homeland security consulting firms—such as the Boeing Corporation, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, and Northrop-Grumman—to supply military radars, long-range camera systems, and other surveillance equipment (Barry 2011; Wylter 2013).

A private detention industry has also emerged to warehouse immigrants. Immigrants are now the fastest growing population in both federal custody and are considered a ‘growth market’ for prison corporations (Greene and Patel 2009). Private detention facilities, such as the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), house as much as half of the 30,000 to 34,000 migrants detained by ICE each day. The U.S. supplies private detention companies 159 dollars per day, per detainee (Pringle 2013). It spends more than 2 billion dollars a year on immigration detention and another 72 million on detention alternatives (National Immigration Forum 2013). Since 2003, immigration enforcement has helped double the earnings of private prisons (Pringle 2013). Entire communities—dubbed ‘prison towns’—have also become dependent upon detention facilities for their economic sustainability (Doty and Wheatley 2013). The deportation regime thus not only sustains private industry, but a web of lives connected to it.

According to Doty and Wheatley (2013), the immigration-industrial complex reflects the *privatization of sovereignty functions* in the neoliberal era. State power is not necessarily declining. Rather it is “increasingly mobile and fluid, often blurring boundaries between public and private sectors and in the process increasing the power of both, especially vis-à-vis the population of persons in detention or potentially subject to detention.” Detention companies spend millions of dollars each year lobbying for their interests. Some industry representatives claim not to be involved in immigration reform, but politicians and ICE officials view lobbying as a ‘mandate to fill those beds’ (Pringle 2013). Investigative reports also reveal that the private

prison industry played a critical role in shaping the Arizona's famous anti-immigrant Senate Bill 1070 (Hodai 2010). In these ways, the immigration-industrial complex has also become a "self-perpetuating machine," invested in the maintenance of unauthorized migration and the criminalization of migration (Brewer and Heitzeg 2008:637). Under such a system the state is also highly invested in the iterative construction and re-construction of unauthorized immigration and undesirable threatening non-citizens, as social problems in need of systematic control (Andreas 2000; Walters 2002).

A Regime in Decline?

Some of these restrictive efforts seem to be in decline. The SBI was cancelled in January 2011 due to the financial expenditures necessary to make it efficient (Seper 2010). In June 2011, the Supreme Court struck down 3 key provisions of Arizona's SB 1070, including: 1) the requirement that immigrants carry immigration documentation, 2) the state-level criminalization of unauthorized immigrants who seek or hold employment, and 3) the provision that police can arrest suspected undocumented immigrants without a warrant. There is evidence that other states are beginning to take this decision into consideration as they decide whether or not to implement local immigration measures (Lam, Heisel, Hermes, and Morse 2012).

Operation Endgame also came to an end in 2012 without coming close to meeting its objective of removing all deportable immigrants. In 2011, the Obama Administration implemented prosecutorial discretion, a policy under which immigration enforcement would target "high-priority" individuals considered threats to public safety, while those who do not pose a threat would be eligible for administrative relief. In 2012, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* (DACA) was offered for individuals who unlawfully migrated to the US as children,

graduated from high school or attained a GED, and avoided certain types of criminal activity. They received temporary relief from removal and authorization to work. They were granted social security, which permit access to driver's licenses and in-state tuition in select states. States and localities have begun to resist participation in the Secure Communities initiative, as evidenced by the TRUST Act in California. In April, 2014, the Obama Administration announced that it intended to review its deportation policies and practices.

Regardless of these events, the deportation regime remains in full force. Although he has taken a more humanitarian tone recently, more individuals continue to be deported under President Obama than any other administration in US history. Federal funding for the Department of Homeland Security – and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in particular discretionary relief and deferred action may suggest a realignment of Obama's enforcement priorities, but they are ultimately only temporary types of relief applied in the absence of true comprehensive immigration reform. Despite claims that they are forms of "amnesty" (Smith 2012), they do not provide a pathway to citizenship and leave qualified migrants in a state of uncertain legal limbo completely dependent upon the whim of the incumbent presidential administration. There is also evidence that discretionary relief has been applied sparingly and haphazardly, suggesting that large numbers of "low-risk" migrants continue to be deported in spite of ICE's new guidelines (Preston 2012; TRAC Immigration 2012). This is consistent with the fact that, in spite of years of similar rhetoric stating that immigration violent criminals are the top priority of immigration enforcement, the vast majority of deported migrants have been removed for immigration violations and minor, non-violent crimes.

Deportation and its Discontents

It is of critical scholarly and political importance to understand the consequences of the emergence of the deportation regime. Individual-level statistics on deportees, their families, and their communities have yet to be made available by the U.S. government. However, an emergent body of literature is beginning to unpack the ways the deportation regime affects in the U.S. and abroad. This work largely focuses on the “discontents” of deportation, chronicling the ways in which removal negatively impacts human lives and communities in the U.S. and abroad.

Effects in the United States

Approximately 70% of individuals in removal proceedings lived in the U.S. for more than ten years prior to their apprehension (TRAC Immigration 2006). This is sufficient time to develop significant familial and other fictive kinship ties, often to people holding different legal statuses (Fix and Zimmerman 2001; Fry and Passel 2009). As a result, millions of family members have been indirectly impacted by mass deportation. A report by the Human Rights Watch (2009) found that, between 1997 and 2007 alone, over a million family members were separated by removal. During that same period, approximately 103,000 children were affected by the deportation of a lawful permanent resident (LPR)—or green card holder—mother or father (Baum, Jones, and Barry 2010). Approximately 44,000, or 43 percent, of these children were under the age of five when their parent was removed. 88,000, or 86%, were U.S. citizens (Baum et al. 2010).

Similar to the “secondary prisonization” experienced by relatives of prisoners, the families of deportees are often subjected to secondary, or *de facto*, deportations (Comfort 2008; Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012). Though not formally deported themselves, they feel the

powerful effects of removal. Some children are forced into foster care after a parent was deported. As of 2011, 5,100 youth were living in foster care because of removal; if trends continue 15,000 are expected by 2016 (Wessler 2011). Other children separated from parents experience changes in eating and sleeping habits and increased levels of fear, anger, depression, and withdrawal (Chaudry, Capps, Pedroza, Castaneda, Santos, and Scott 2010). They miss days of school, begin to misbehave in class, and let their grades slip (Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry, and Santos 2007). Adult spouses left behind experience financial hardships due to the loss of a breadwinner (Brabeck and Xu 2010; Kremer, Moccio, and Hammell 2009). They experience higher rates of poverty, housing instabilities, and food insufficiency. Many turn to informal support networks, private charities, and public assistance to survive economically (Brabeck, Lykes, and Hershberg 2011; Chaudry et al. 2010; Hagen, Castro, and Rodríguez 2010; Rodríguez and Hagen 2004).

Deportation also powerfully reconfigures families in the U.S. and abroad. Forced separations are typically lengthy, or indefinite, because of deportees' bans on re-entry and contradictions between family and immigration law (Thornson 2006). Some family members, U.S. citizens included, leave the U.S. to live with deportees abroad. This is financially impossible for most. For others, to do so amounts to leaving the economic securities, benefits, and opportunities associated with life in the U.S. To prevent family dissolution, some family members engage in transnational modes of communication via phone calls, email, and social networking. Despite such efforts, preliminary evidence suggests that time and distance results in the dissolution of many families (Dreby 2012).

Another powerful effect of the deportation regime is the production of *deportability*, the fear of removal (De Genova 2002). Over 50% of Latinos know someone who had been deported

and approximately 68% of Hispanics fear that they, a family member, or a friend could be deported (Lopez and Minuskin 2008; Pew Hispanic Center 2007). Such fears cause many migrants to become “hyper-aware” of their legal status (Menjívar 2011). They adjust the ways they move through the world to prevent removal (Willen 2007). They may reduce how often they drive, attend school meetings for their children, utilize medical services, attend community events, visit the library, and frequent community parks (Rodriguez and Hagen 2004). Rather than spend extra income they earn, they often save or remit it as insurance against a future deportation (Rodriguez and Hagen 2004). Though an incredibly vibrant immigration reform movement exists, especially among child migrants called DREAMers, deportability prevents many unauthorized migrants from ‘coming out of the shadows’ to advocate for legalization and other rights (Gonzales 2008). According to De Genova (2002), such socioeconomic and political vulnerability is an implicit, unstated, goal of the deportation regime. It helps maintain a pliable, and thus easily exploitable, migrant workforce.

Effects in Deportees’ Countries-of-Citizenship

The lives of deportees are also profoundly affected by the deportation regime. Ethnographic research demonstrates that for many deportees removal amounts to *de facto* banishment from the lives and families they established in the U.S. (Brotherton and Barrios 2012; Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012; Golash-Boza 2014). Many migrants, a population Daniel Kanstroom (2012) calls the *new American diaspora* maintain strong connections with the U.S. in spite of deportee status. Such individuals are often “ill prepared for their return” (Gmelch 1980:143). Since they maintained weak transnational ties while abroad they often return to countries with which they have few memories and weak social networks (Levitt and Waters

2002). Some even lose the language of their countries-of-birth (Rumbaut 2002). When returned, they are forced to navigate social worlds with which they have little to no familiarity, while being estranged—sometimes permanently—from the economic and affective ties they maintain to the U.S. Such ruptures have serious consequences for the livelihoods of deportees (Brotherton and Barrios 2011; Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012; Golash-Boza 2014; Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro 2011; Miller 2008).

When members of the new America diaspora return to their native “homelands,” they are often seen as failed migrants or potentially threatening foreigners (Brotherton and Barrios 2012; Dingeman-Cerda and Rumbaut forthcoming; Drotbohm 2012; Peutz 2010; Zilberg 2011). Many deportees to experience a sense of “inbetween placeness” in which they realize, sometimes for the first time, that they were deeply influenced by former host societies (Ramji 2006). Feelings of loss and dislocation can cause deportees to reject local economic conditions and culture and form reactive or oppositional identities (Dingeman-Cerda and Rumbaut forthcoming). They may struggle to secure stable and legitimate employment (Miller 2008). Many also become the targets of local gang members who are threatened by them or are seeking to recruit them (Coutin 2007; Zilberg 2011). Some deportees do join gangs. Others become the targets of police and private security forces that, often erroneously, conflate their identities with gang members (Coutin 2007; Zilberg 2011).

Members of the new American diaspora maintain transnational ties with loved ones via phone calls, emails, social networking, and the receipt of financial remittances (Golash-Boza 2014). Many deportees long to return to the U.S., especially to re-establish family relationships, and some do, typically without authorization from the U.S. (Hagan, Rodriguez, and Eschbach 2008). Those who remain in their countries-of-citizenship often feel constrained by the costly

and dangerous journey back to the U.S. and the risks of clandestinely re-entering the U.S., being apprehended by immigration enforcement, and federal incarceration for illegal re-entry (Coutin 2010). Many deportees “resign themselves to existing...while dreaming, usually in vain, of reclaiming their former U.S.-based lives” (Dingeman-Cerda and Rumbaut forthcoming).

Overview of this Dissertation

This dissertation aims to extend burgeoning literature examining the subjective experience of migrants deported from the United States. Existing research focuses almost exclusively upon the new American diaspora, individuals who typically migrated to the U.S. as children, spent their formative years there, and were removed several years later. This project is the first of its kind to explicitly compare the experiences of this population—which I refer to as U.S. nationals—with migrants who primarily came to the U.S. as adults and were deported within a few months or years of arrival—who I refer to as nationals of their country-of-citizenship. The dissertation seeks to understand how members of both groups narrate their process of going home to their country of citizenship. It addresses two key empirical issues: (1) whether, the ways in which, and under what conditions deportees experience return as a “homecoming” or not and (2) what types of coping or “homemaking” strategies deportees employ as they establish new lives post-removal.

To address these questions, the dissertation engages the multiple and conflicting meanings of “home,” as well as literature on immigrant incorporation and return migrant reintegration. It utilizes a case study approach, focusing on deportation from the U.S. to El Salvador. It draws upon an inductive analysis of questionnaires and life-history interviews conducted between 2008 and 2013 with a purposive stratified sample of 100 Salvadoran

deportees. It is also informed by 20 open-ended interviews with attorneys, social workers, activists, and other officials knowledgeable about migration, deportation, and gang issues. It is supplemented by ethnographic observations conducted in nonprofit organizations, public spaces, and private homes around San Salvador and Los Angeles. This approach provides a rich source of data from which post-deportation experiences can be better understood.

El Salvador was chosen as a “strategic research site” for this project (Merton 1987). Salvadorans are now one of the largest and most legally vulnerable foreign-born populations in the U.S. Migratory ties between the U.S. and El Salvador can be traced to the 1950s and before, but they rapidly increased during the Salvadoran civil war in the 1980s and 1990s, just as the deportation regime was emerging. By 2012, an estimated 1.25 million foreign-born Salvadorans resided in the U.S., making them to sixth largest foreign-born, third largest Hispanic, and, second largest undocumented population in the country (Brown and Patten 2013; Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker 2012; PNUD 2005). The same year they were also one of the most highly deported immigrant populations from the U.S. With as many as 20,000 removals from the U.S. to El Salvador annually, Salvadoran removals are fourth behind only Mexicans, Guatemalans, and Hondurans.

The dissertation argues that divergent post-deportation “homecomings” can be defined as the degree to which and ways in which deportees become ‘embedded’ in their ‘native’ countries after removal. Post-deportation embeddedness is shaped by the context to which deportees return and their individual-level characteristics. Individuals with different demographic characteristics, migratory histories, criminal histories, economic resources, and social ties will inevitably experience the context of return in different ways. The degree and mode of post-deportation embeddedness in turn influences the amount of freedom deportees have to craft sites of

belonging that are both meaningful and sustainable. As such, more accepting contexts of return are more likely to allow deportees to experience the process as a more authentic “homecoming” or a “warm return” that does not require much maneuvering to be sustainable. As contexts of return grow more hostile, deportees will encounter increased barriers to post-deportation embeddedness, leaving many to feel ostracized in their native “homelands” with limited options for survival and constructing a sense of “home.”

The Salvadoran Case

The Salvadoran context of return is conceptualized as a series of overlapping social fields at various levels of society and in multiple arenas. It has been deeply impacted by the existence of a transnational social field between the U.S. and El Salvador. The U.S. has a long history of neocolonial intervention into Salvadoran political and economic affairs. Early in the nation’s history, U.S. capitalists invested in El Salvador’s burgeoning coffee industry. Through the late 20th century they financially supported the oligarchy that dominated domestic affairs. When longstanding socioeconomic inequalities erupted in a civil war from 1980 to 1992, the U.S. financially backed the Salvadoran military. In the post-war era, the U.S. has promoted a neoliberal economic agenda in the region, which has resulted in the disinvestment in public programs, privatization of national industries, increased foreign-direct investment from U.S. and multinational firms, the dollarization of the economy, and the signing of the *Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement* (CAFTA-DR). The U.S. also exported zero-tolerance and heavy handed policing strategies to El Salvador to address the gangs that have proliferated among disenfranchised youth since the end of the war. Each of these interventions into Salvadoran affairs has worked to maintain high levels of migration to the U.S.

In recent decades, the Salvadoran state has pursued methods of “transnational governmentality.” This effort is exemplified by the national monument, *El Hermano Lejano* (The Distant Brother), which recognizes migrants as valiant and heroic adventurers who sustain the domestic economy through their labor and remittances (Baker-Cristales 2004). Trans/nation building efforts such as this keep migrants emotionally and financially invested in their country-of-origin. They allow migrants to imagine that they might be warmly welcomed ‘home’ upon return. Unfortunately, this illusion is sharply contrasted against the reality of return for many deportees sent back to El Salvador. By definition, deported persons fail to meet the migratory objectives that they, their families, and the state expected of them. They are not only unable to continue providing financial support from abroad, but they run the risk of becoming financial burdens. They also often embody foreign elements that considered indigestible in their “native” land. The conflation of deportee and gangster identities is particularly pervasive in Salvadoran society, leading to the labeling of entire categories of deportees as potential threats to national security. Thus, far from returning as national heroes, many deportees return with spoiled identities that significantly limit their life chances.

Post-Deportation Trajectories in El Salvador

Data from this dissertation shows that deportees go through a process of readjustment upon return in El Salvador. They struggle with social, economic, and political challenges that prompt most of them to at least consider a clandestine return migration to the US. However, the best predict divergent patterns in post-deportation embeddedness were migratory and criminal histories. Migratory histories included the degree to which migrants were acculturated into U.S. society, determined mostly by their age at migration and length of time abroad. Criminal

histories included a history of gang involvement and or the presence of visible tattoos that often indicate such a history in Salvadoran society. In my sample these two factors were highly correlated such that those with stronger levels of acculturation to the U.S.—or U.S. nationals—were more likely to have gang histories prior to removal. They were also more likely to return to San Salvador and other urban areas and were less likely to have local social ties in El Salvador. They did have, however, greater access to economic resources, including higher levels of education and more financial support available from family in the U.S.

The dissertation ultimately draws on these distinctions to explicate three primary post-deportation trajectories—or ways of becoming embedded—in El Salvador. The first trajectory is followed by Salvadoran nationals. This is a population that were not in the U.S. long enough to become acculturated there. For the most part, they denied involvement in gangs in the U.S. and few reported tattoos. Upon return they were aware of a deportee-stigma, were concerned about being perceived as failed migrants, but often felt warmly welcomed “home” after removal, at least relative to U.S. nationals. Though many did feel compelled to discursively distance themselves from U.S. nationals and “criminal” deportees, they did not feel it necessary to engage in numerous other coping or homemaking strategies to feel they belonged upon return. Despite their relatively higher levels embeddedness, however, they continued to face the hostile economic context that most Salvadorans—including non-migrants—must navigate. This economic context limits their chance of establishing an economically sustainable “home,” forcing many to consider increasingly risky re-migrations to the U.S.

U.S. nationals typically felt they were banished from the “homes” they built in the U.S., felt like foreigners in their countries-of-citizenship, and were highly stigmatized and criminalized in Salvadoran society. They were the victims of prejudice, employment discrimination, police

surveillance, and acts of violence. In a relatively hostile context of return, they needed to employ a multitude of coping strategies to survive. This included becoming dependent on transnational ties, limiting their public visibility, wearing long-sleeved shirts to hide their tattoos, developing oppositional identities that distance them from other Salvadorans. Over time some were also able to craft “home-like” conditions in El Salvador, usually by finding partners, getting married, and having children or by finding and maintaining informal social solidarity with other deportees they encounter in the streets or their places of employment. Many others, however, remained marginalized in El Salvador. They dreamed of return migrations and sometimes attempted them. They became involved in the informal labor market and were occasionally recruited by gangs. They struggled with mental health issues and addictions. With an overall lack of acceptance by the state and the society, they resisted the idea that El Salvador could ever become their “home.”

The final trajectory was followed by individuals with gang histories in the U.S. This was primarily—though not exclusively—a subpopulation of U.S. nationals. Many had witnessed brutal violence during the Salvadoran civil war when they were children. After migrating to the U.S. as children they mostly grew up in the U.S. in racially divisive urban spaces like South-Central Los Angeles where gangs were prevalent. There they acculturated into Latino gangs which implicated them in crimes that eventually led to incarceration and removal from the U.S. In El Salvador they struggled with similar problems as other U.S. nationals, but usually to a greater degree because of the presence of more tattoos that were usually gang-related and occasionally a more oppositional attitude toward consciously adapting to Salvadoran ways. The population unanimously, however, reported desires to avoid gangs in El Salvador and many were able to do so because of the tactics they employed to cover their identities.

Others, however, struggled with fragile local social support networks, a lack of foreign economic support, increased levels of violence and criminalization, and a persistent inability to find legitimate employment. Such persons were in positions of ‘multiple marginality’ that compelled them to become involved with gangs (Vigil 2002). Such individuals quickly rose to power in their gangs because of the “authentic” knowledge they were believed to have gained in the U.S. They tried to more positively change the culture in their gangs by directing local youth to focus more on the protection of territory than brutal violence. However they also participated in and directed extortions, robberies, and murders. Several interviewees were physically harmed during their involvement in gangs and all that I spoke with were looking for a way out. The local context of return offered a Christian support network for recovering gangsters. Those that took advantage of this opportunity worked to transform themselves from “homies” into “Christian Brothers.” This was a way in which even the most marginalized and demonized of deported persons could rebuild their lives. But it was also a dangerous process, one that if not handled with care could result in a violent death—a reality of at least one participant in this study.

Conclusion

The empirical findings of this dissertation demonstrate that deportation is a key turning point in the lives of deported persons. Deportees are a heterogeneous population and their post-deportation trajectories are varied, non-linear, and sometimes counterintuitive. Social contexts interact with persons histories to determine how individuals will experience going ‘home.’ In many cases, deportee identities become master statues that influence practically all other post-deportation interactions. This can lead to vulnerable, precarious livelihoods in countries-of-citizenship. However like all humans deportees are remarkably resilient. Even in highly hostile

contexts of return, they are capable of surviving, coping, and crafting sites of belonging that feel something like the comfort and security of “home.” Despite such maneuvering, however, the question remains whether the U.S. and the countries that receive its deportees are managing the process of removal humanely and effectively. Deportees’ narratives indicate that reality could be much different and a primary goal of this dissertation is to suggest how.

CHAPTER 2

The Im-possibilities of Return: Homecomings through the Lens of Embeddedness

“That people could come into the world in a place they could not at first even name and have never known before: and that out of a nameless and unknown place they could grow and move around in it until its name they knew and called with love, and call it HOME, and put roots there and love others there: so that whenever they left this place they would sing homesick songs about it and write poems of yearning for it...and forever be returning to it or leaving it again!”

-- Willam Goyen, *The House of Breath* (1950)

“One never reaches home,” she said. “But where paths that have an affinity for each other intersect, the whole world looks like home, for a time.”

-- Hermann Hesse, *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth* (1919)

“Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition.”

-- James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956)

What does it mean to have a “home”? The proliferation of the concept in everyday discourse, popular culture, and literary history suggests that the home as a cultural reference point is one of foundational importance, at least in the Western world (Morley 2009; Silva 2009). Most of the English-speaking world is familiar with expressions such as “there is no place like home” and “home is where the heart is.” They are also familiar with dictionary definitions that link person to place, usually through feelings of belonging, comfort, or refuge. Beyond these lay notions, however, it has been challenging for scholars to delineate a more scientific definition of “home.” Its sociocultural meanings are vast, subjective, and change over time and across space. The concept thus has a chimerical quality that can be hard to pin down (Fox 2002). Home is also deeply political; its analysis inevitably “stimulates emotional and deeply field argument and disagreement...for feminists, who see it in the crucible of gender domination: for liberals, who identify it with personal autonomy and a challenge to state power: for socialists, who approach it

as a challenge to collectively life and the ideal of a planned and egalitarian social order” (Saunders and Williams 1988:91).

Recent reviews of the literature have focused on historical development of the concept. Tracing the word’s etymology, Hollander (1991) claims that the English word “home” derives from the Anglo-Saxon word *ham*, which means village, estate, or town¹ (Hollander 1991). In England, the concept referred to individuals’ geographic origin until the 18th century (Hayward 1977). With industrial capitalism and a gendered division of labor on the rise, the bourgeoisie altered the meaning of the term. Berger (1984) claims that “the concept of homeland was appropriated by the ruling classes. At the same time, the idea of home became the focal point for a form of “domestic morality” aimed at safeguarding familial property, including estates, women, and children.” By the 19th century the private “house” had become the symbol for the “home.” It was a physical space in which hardworking men could receive nourishment and comfort, while women and children could be shielded from external threats. “The Englishman’s house,” had clearly transformed into “his castle” (Rykwert 1991, 53).

Contemporary definitions of home still tend to “privilege a physical structure or dwelling, such as a house, flat, institution, or caravan” (Bowelby, Gregory, and McKie 1997: 344). However, today’s definitions typically carry an affective connotation. The home is not just a structure, but a site of psychosocial belonging. In her classic article *House, as Symbol of the Self*, Cooper (1976) discovered that, when individuals attain, construct, or embellish a domicile, it becomes greater than its physical structure and its adornments. The “ideal home” is an expression of dwellers’ personal identities: it is a psychological haven, a place in which they can feel at-ease. The house-as-home comes to “acquire a fixed point” in the occupier’s subjective

¹ The Germanic words *heim*, *ham*, and *heem* derive from the Indo-European word *kei*, which means both ‘lying down’ and ‘something dear or beloved’ (Hollander 1991).

world, yielding a sort of psychological magnetism that aligns everything else around it (Dovey 1985). As William Goyen marveled in *The House of Breath* (1950) “HOME” does not naturally exist but over time it *becomes* a place where people “put roots there and love others there: so that whenever they left this place they would sing homesick songs about it and write poems of yearning for it...and forever be returning to it or leaving it again!”

Philosophers extend the concept beyond the domicile and the feelings it represents. The “home” is at once a psychosocial and cultural product, constructed consciously and unconsciously by social actors at all levels of society. Havel’s (1993) work represents such a conceptualization. Similar to Bourdieu’s vision of society as a series of overlapping social fields, Havel represented the home by a series of concentric circles that included the house, village or town, family, professional environment, nation, continent, and world. Each single-level home was associated with certain inalienable rights, including the right to national self-determination and civil and human rights afforded to individual persons. The sites in which such rights were granted would become veritable sources of identity and social belonging among its members. When people were provided rights at *all* levels, they would feel “at home” in the world-at-large and would be able to “realize themselves freely as human beings.” Conversely, when people were “deprived of all the aspects of his home, man would be deprived of himself, of his humanity” (Havel 1993:31).

Havel’s model, while deeply political, ignored home’s subjective and fluid dimensions². People have complex relationships with their homes. They can “evoke security in one context

² Václav Havel was a playwright, poet, philosopher, and politician. He was also the last president of Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech Republic, a position he held until 2003. A primary motivation of his writing *Summer Meditations* (1993) was to allow Slovaks to retain their national identity and still feel “at home” in the Czech Republic. To achieve this, it was necessary for him to idealize the home and to conceive of each of its multiple levels as equally important. Though Havel later conceded the importance of a sense of global citizenship over national citizenship, there was no space in his early conceptualization of “home” for subjective evaluations that might place priority of “ethnic group” over “nation” (Tucker 1994).

and seem confining in another” (Jackson 1995:122-123). They can be sites of tension and disempowerment as much as they are sites of comfort, belonging, and affection (Bowly et al. 1997: Crenshaw 1994: hooks 1990). Yet in the midst of these less-than-ideal conditions most people still continue to accept their perceived, and often socially mandated, homes as cradles of identity and belonging—and as the foundations for collective action. Some people, of course, reject the oppressive spaces once considered home and begin to search for new sites of belonging in other geographic locations and in different social networks. People can also go through their entire lives searching for spaces of safety, comfort, and freedom that they are denied and may never encounter. It turns out that for many, or most, people there may actually be “no place like home” because the “ideal homes” for which they yearn may not exist in the imperfect world humans have constructed.

This possibility does not, of course, prevent humans from continually wandering, searching for, and fighting for sites of belonging that are at least “home-like” (Ginsberg 1999). Heidegger (1971) contends that a basic character of “being” is “dwelling” and out of our capacity to dwell emerges our capacity to “build.” Inspired by this claim, scholars frequently note the remarkable aptitude humans have to employ their agency. According to Ginsberg (1999:31), “we make our homes. Not necessarily by (physically) constructing them, although some people do that. We build the intimate shell of our lives by the organization and “furnishing of the space in which we live.” As Havel (1993) astutely observed, this process of “homemaking” is inherently *social*. It involves more than an accumulation of human agents, but an *interaction* between these agents and the *contexts* in which they find themselves. When the process of homemaking is successful, people should be able to subjectively identify spaces and

places that are at least approximations of the “ideal homes” they have in their minds (Jackson 1995; Sommerville 1992).

Journeying, Looking Back, and the Pull toward the “Homeland”

Humans are inherent wanderers. “People, unlike trees and bushes are not “rooted” – people are born with legs...and intelligence (that) opens to us ever new spatial and intellectual horizons” (Tucker 1994:186). Some three million years ago we migrated from our native land in the plains of Africa and gradually settled around the globe. In the modern world we continue to be mobile, moving between house to work, from villages to urban centers, and across international political borders. As we move around the globe, we interact with other humans, exchanging knowledge and capital in its multiple forms. We share in common struggles and compete with one another over land, resources, and power. Amidst all of this cooperative and contentious interaction, we ultimately seem to be searching for and desperately trying to safeguard something inherently basic to our humanity. We seek to attain and retain states of security, comfort, belonging, and freedom. We crave a place and space called “home.”

The concept of “homeland” has historically been employed by state governments to promote national identity and to safeguard national interests (Berger 1985). The ways in which the political economy has been organized at the global and national levels has ensured that not all persons born within their ancestral homeland have equal access to rights and opportunities. The national “homeland” becomes for many persons not a “home,” but a site in which “undesirables—those that do not conform—are excluded” (Bowlby et al. 1997:343). Unable to fully construct sustainable and meaningful homes in their countries-of-origin, many people move across international borders to search for such a space elsewhere (Castles, de Haas, and Miller

2013). Of the 214 million people living outside their “homelands” in the contemporary period, most migrated to improve or to maintain their socioeconomic status³. Others, about 10.5 million in 2011, were forcefully pushed out, or expelled, due to armed conflict, natural disaster, famine, or persecution in their countries-of-origin (UNPF 2014). Regardless of the initial motivation, it is apparent that migrants cross borders to escape homes considered inhospitable, build new homes abroad, or draw upon the migratory experience to improve the homes for which they yearn in their sending countries.

When international migrants enter their host countries, they often do not encounter the context they expected or hoped to discover. Many people who consider their migrations a “failure” will quickly return to their countries-of-origin in an effort to reclaim the lives they left behind (Cerese 1974). Others will find ways to adapt to the host country. Discourse around the “home” and the “homeland” can provide a kind of metaphorical glue that can bind otherwise alienated individuals into semi-bounded ethnic enclaves, transnational communities, and diasporas. These communities keep the “homing narrative” alive through transnational ties with countries-of-origins, by communicating with family and friends, sending remittances, and staying politically engaged. National governments and NGOs can also help keep the “ideology of return” (Rubenstein 1979) alive through modes of transnational governmentality aimed at uniting their populations living abroad around domestic issues (Baker-Cristales 2008). As these actors help construct a transnational social field between sending and receiving states, migrants

³ This is about 3 percent of the world’s population. The majority of the world does not migrate internationally. Those that do are a positively selected population. They tend to not be the most excluded populations in the countries-of-origin because a certain amount of capital is usually necessary to emigrate. But the ease of transportation in the contemporary period has meant that more people are migrating internationally than they did in earlier historical eras (Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

regularly make return visits between countries—and some eventually go back to the “homeland” permanently (Cassarino 2004; Cerase 1974; Gmelch 1980).

Between 20 and 30 percent of migrants will return to their ancestral “homeland” within twenty years of arrival to the U.S. (Borjas and Bratsburg 1996; Mayr and Peri 2008; Warren and Kraly 1985). Countries in close proximity and with well-established patterns of circular migration will likely experience even higher levels (see Massey 2005). Still, the “ideology of return” said to be maintained by migrant populations seems to be grossly overestimated. Clifford (1994) claims that most migrant and ethnic groups, including the Jewish quasi-diaspora, maintain a remarkable degree of ambivalence regarding return. Migrants usually prefer to remain in their host countries because “political and economic conditions are not favorable to (return)” (Baker-Cristales 2004: 86). If they leave, they might lose rights and benefits associated with their presence or membership. If they associate their sending countries with violence, poverty, joblessness, and other hardships, they also may not wish to return.

Return Home as Im-Possible

Even if most migrants wanted to return to their host countries, scholars have unsettled the notion that “going home” is even possible. Doreen Massey (1994:119) claims that there is “no single simple ‘authenticity’—a unique eternal truth of an (actual or imagined/remembered) place or home – to be used as a reference either now or in the past.” In a similar vein, Yngvesson and Coutin (2006:178) argue that the idea of home “is predicated on a single origin, an original self, and a transparent account of becoming” (Yngvesson and Coutin 2006:178). Humans have multiple origins, or multiple starting places that are constantly being constructed in non-linear and often unanticipated ways. Identities are always coming into being, so the locations of their

multiple and corresponding “homes” are perpetually moving targets. Since people and places change over time, the idea that a migrant could ever truly return to a singular, monolithic, and authentic “homeland” is impossible—and any dreams migrants’ have of doing so are illusions.

When migrants go back to their countries of origin they generally do not find the “home” that they embrace, remember, or imagine. Baker-Cristales (2004: 83) states that “with time and distance, the difficulties of one’s country of birth are forgotten and memories of one’s former life there grow increasingly nostalgic. Memory fuses with dream, and the homeland becomes imbued with magic—a place of warmth and love, infinite possibility, and the essence of belonging.” Such feelings of nostalgia are far from universal, but when they do exist, they can be problematic. The passage of time brings about changes in the country-of-origin that make it no longer resemble the romanticized images some migrants maintain. The process of incorporation into host countries can also alter migrants in ways that can make them shadows of the selves they associate with their countries- and communities-of-origin⁴ (Coutin 2011).

This dialectical process of change causes many return migrants to experience a sort of “reverse culture shock” (Gmelch 1980), “inbetween placeness” (Ramji 2006), and sense of “coerced homelessness” (Rumbaut 2005) upon return. They can become disillusioned with local customs, material and industrial limitations, and poor treatment by locals, many of whom perceive and treat them as outsiders. This can cause them to realize, sometimes for the first time,

⁴ In Jungian psychology, a “shadow self” is the part of human consciousness with which we do not overtly identify, or the part of ourselves that we deny or repress. The shadow self subtly often dictates our thoughts, feelings, identities, and behaviors without our knowledge or conscious consent. We most often become aware of it when the behaviors we exhibit are in opposition to the ways in which we identify. Here, I employ the concept of “shadow self” to signify the ways migrants and their progeny are changed by the process of acculturation and incorporation into host societies. They are often not aware of the degree to which they have changed until they return to the “homeland” and discover that they have become different in thought and behavior than non-migrants (see Tsuda 2009). Coutin (2011:248) eloquently explains a related process regarding the experience of return among Salvadoran youth, “the alternative versions of the self are desired in that they promise wholeness, authenticity, and belonging. But they are also frightening, as they may seem alien, and they hark back to a country at war, to poverty, or to gendered behavior that seems to afford fewer opportunities. I refer to these other versions of the self as “shadow selves” both because they are unrealized potentials and because they “shadow” people, making them aware of what they could have been.”

that they have been deeply influenced by their former host societies. They may begin to feel nostalgic for the lives and relationships constructed abroad, develop hybridized or oppositional national identities, and shift the location of their perceived “home” away from their countries-of-origin (Brotherton and Barrios 2011; Braakman and Schlenkhoff 2007; Cerase 1974; Gmelch 1980; Tsuda 2003). In more extreme cases of post-removal marginalization, they may dream, actively plan, or attempt to re-migrate to their former host countries with the hope of reconstructing the lives and relationships they once left behind (Hagan, Eschbach and Rodríguez 2008).

By portraying deportees’ homecomings as impossible, or at least highly problematic, scholars help counter the seemingly pervasive and erroneous notion that return to these societies is natural (Tucker 1994). Such analyses remain limited, however, by their view of the “home” as something that necessarily existed in the past and cannot be reconstructed in new and creative ways (Stefansson 2004). The impossibility of ever really “going back” does not prevent migratory populations—and the states, institutions, and organizations in which they are embedded—from engaging in practices that attempt to “make real” that which is ephemeral (Yngvesson and Coutin 2006). States can govern transnationally in ways that encourage migrants to remain connected to the homeland emotionally and financially. Migrants can travel back to their sending countries to help keep their attachments to their homelands alive. If migrants permanently return they sometimes can engage in behaviors that make their country-of-origin “home-like” even when the passage of time makes it no longer resemble how they remember it.

In her ethnography of the experiences of Tigrayans repatriated from the Sudan to Ethiopia in the mid-1990s, Hammond (1999: 2004) rejected the notion that return migrant “homecomings” can be dichotomized into wholly possible or impossible projects. Instead, she

found it more fruitful for her case to view migrants' homecomings as creative *future-oriented projects* imbued with agency. The Ethiopians she studied were incapable of reclaiming their "homeland" upon return because they were resettled in areas with which they had little to no familiarity. As a result, they "did not *come* home: rather they made a new home that held meaning for them" (Hammond 1999:47). They established new social and kinship ties, invented new social practices, and found ways to attain economic self-sufficiency despite their limited access to international humanitarian or development assistance. It was through this practice referred to as "homemaking" that the once *impossible* project of going home became somehow *possible*. It amounted to a new, and powerfully transformative, "starting point" from which the returnees could build sustainable lives that were "home-like" even in the face of extreme hardship and inter/national neglect.

Post-Deportation Homecomings

Literature on post-deportation "homecomings" is nascent and underdeveloped, but existing findings lend credence to the notion that going "home" is impossible—or at least extremely problematic—for most deported persons. In a recent review of this literature, Golash-Boza (2013:66) identified five common themes, all of which "(highlight) the extreme duress deportees endure and the socio-psychological costs of deportation." The first theme helps demystify the notion that migrants' countries-of-citizenship are their natural sites of belonging. Nearly all post-deportation research has thus far focused on the experiences of migrants who spend their formative years in their host countries and were sent back years later as adults—a population referred to in immigration literature as the 1.5 generation. These deportees usually have few memories or ties to their "homeland." They had acculturated to different ways of

seeing and being in the world in while abroad and thus tend to be unfamiliar with contexts to which they are returned. With more ties, or stronger ties, to their former host countries, they typically experience deportation as an exile or banishment from their perceived “home” rather than a return to it (see Brotherton and Barrios 2011; Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012; Golash-Boza 2013).

A second major theme in post-deportation literature is that deportees usually feel a “profound despair in regard to their future prospects” (Golash-Boza 2013:66). Almost by definition, deportees are persons who were unable to complete the migratory goals they, their families, or their communities and nation-states set out for them. When they are involuntarily returned, they tend to feel a sense of shame or disappointment (Headley 2006). Abruptly torn away from their families, friends, careers, and ways of life, they are then forced to navigate societies they often do not recognize as their own. They can experience a “reverse culture shock” that can make it difficult to survive or thrive post-return (Pereira 2011). Many deportees have bans on their legal re-entry to former host societies, which causes them to feel confined within—or incarcerated within—their countries-of-origin (Coutin 2010). This reaffirmed the sense that deportation is an exile or banishment and that they do not “belong” in their ancestral homelands. It ultimately contributes to feelings of despair and hopelessness.

A third theme speaks to the “salience of state power to their lives in the USA and elsewhere” (Golash-Boza 2013:66). Deported persons typically lived in vulnerable states of deportability—including undocumented or liminal statuses—in their host societies prior to removal. They spent days, months, or years in immigration detention, and were sometimes also incarcerated for criminal convictions, prior to being removed, usually separated from family members and other loved ones. Once returned to their countries of origin, their states typically

register them as deported persons and continue to survey them as they go about their “daily rounds” (Goffman 1963). Deportees have been reported to be the object of not only police and private security surveillance, but of vigilante or state-sponsored death squads (Coutin 2007: 2010; Dingeman-Cerda and Rumbaut 2010; Headly 2006; Zilberg 2004: 2007: 2010). If deportees try to escape the surveillance of the state in their “home” country, they may try to return to the host country, but if they had bans on re-entry, they do so under the threat of federal incarceration. Their lives thus appear to become increasingly threatened by state power, and increasingly vulnerable, at each stage of the migration cycle.

A fourth set of concerns highlights the fact that migrants are transformed from the senders to the receivers of remittances through the process of removal. As a mostly male population, deportees were often breadwinners or major economic providers for their families in the host country and family members left behind in the country-of-origin. When they are removed, they lose their jobs. To pay for legal expenses and to start up a new life abroad, they also often lose their savings and pricey material goods, such as their cars, they accumulated abroad. Upon return, they may not have the correct education credentials, lack social ties to connect them to local jobs, and are discriminated against by local employers. Without employment or with precarious jobs, many deportees become dependent upon remittances from family members left behind in the host country. Not only is the deportee transformed from a breadwinner to a dependent, but the family members abroad are forced to survive without a breadwinner and to support him or her through remittances. For the male deportees interviewed by Golash-Boza (2013) in Jamaica, such transformations were profoundly de-masculinizing, and thus contributed to the senses of confinement and despair they reported upon return.

A final theme identified in post-deportation literature was that deportees often held “feelings that a stigma is associated with being a deportee” (Golash-Boza 2013:66). In their landmark study on the “social-psychological crisis of the deportee,” Brotherton and Barrios (2009:44) argued that “Dominicans can often spot a deportee from afar, their dress, their walk, their language, all give them away. This physical otherness of the Americanized deportee handily combines with the corporate media campaigns, and public statements by police officials and actions by the legislature which create a form of moral panic...” This “moral panic” around deportation ostensibly links the deportee population with criminality. Deported persons, in turn, carry the stigma of “felons” or “gang members,” a label that causes problems when they try to find a job or build strong ties with people in their neighborhoods. Similar findings have been reported in multiple other countries. For example, in his examination of deportee re/integration in Jamaica, Headley (2006) uncovered no direct link between the presence of criminal deportees and “sophisticated” crime. Yet the Jamaican state continued to construct deportees as enemies and national security threats. Similar findings have been reported in Haiti (Kushner 2011), Soma and Tonga (Pereira 2011), and El Salvador (Coutin 2007: 2010: Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012: Dingeman-Cerda and Rumbaut 2010: Zilberg 2004: 2007: 2010).

All of these factors combine to diminish the life chances of deported persons. It can be difficult to survive when deportees are discriminated against in local job markets, are under the surveillance of the state, and, in some contexts, are under the threat of gangs. Disillusioned with local customs, income and material limitations, and poor treatment by natives, deportees report feelings of anxiety, disillusionment, uncertainty, and suicidal ideations (Pereira 2011). Deportees often find themselves feeling nostalgic for the lives and relationships they constructed abroad. To cope, they retain transnational communication via phone calls, emails, social media, and

remittances, with their family and friends abroad (Golash-Boza 2013). Most dream of re-migrating to escape their situation. Many actually do attempt to “go back” once again in order to recapture or reconstruct the lives they were forced to leave behind (Hagan et al. 2008). In these ways, the cycle of migration continues even in the wake of forced expulsion and the promise of heightened levels of “deportability” upon return (Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012).

In her essay calling for scholarly attention to deportation studies, Peutz (2006) argued that deportees were involuntary migrants who embodied a sort of “reverse refugeness.” All available evidence since her call overwhelming supports the idea that there does indeed exist a cognizable “deportee condition.” Deported persons share several important similarities, including the experience of living in states of deportability in their host countries, being apprehended and detained by criminal or immigration officials, and undergoing the process of removal. They all also re-enter societies to which they are not adequately prepared to return, to which they never planned to return, and to which they often have little connection. Their relatively low level of “preparedness” makes them more likely than other types of returnees (especially high skilled labor migrants and entrepreneurs) to encounter “difficult conditions at home” (Cassarino 2004:273). Upon removal they are also often separated from people, jobs, identities, and dreams associated with their former host countries and they generally receive little to no support from their governments to assist with adjustment. These factors accumulate, helping make re-emigration a perpetual possibility for deportees. They all subtly work together to ensure that the population remains in a precarious state.

While compelling and ostensibly accurate the scholarly narrative around post-deportation homecomings remains limited in a couple ways. First, current research focuses primarily on the experiences of the 1.5 generation who grow up in their host countries and are deported many

years later. While generational cohort status is critically important, deportees are a much more heterogeneous population than this narrative suggests. Deported persons migrate from their host countries at different ages for a variety of different reasons. They settle in different parts of host countries and attain different legal statuses. They experience different degrees of interaction with criminal justice systems. They are deported at different ages after spending different lengths of time abroad. They return to different regions of their countries-of-origin post-removal and maintained different levels of connection to the U.S. upon return. Deportees also maintain varying genders, levels of education, practice different religions, and adhere to different political ideologies. A more holistic story would emerge if researchers worked to capture and make sense of more of this diversity in their work.

A second limitation of the current literature is that it reads as overly structured or deterministic when post-deportation experiences actually appear to be much more plentiful and paradoxical. The emphasis in the literature has been on explaining how return is *experienced* at the expense of understanding how deportees *respond* to and *contest* their circumstances. More work can be done to elucidate the multitude of ways the population manages their social identities, engages transnationally, and employs ‘homemaking’ strategies (Hammond 1999: 2004). This can, and should be accomplished within the current paradigm. It is helpful, however, to view deportee ‘homecomings’ as ‘messy points’ at which individuals try to establish “authentic and satisfying lives” or “homes” *within the constraints* imposed by their social environments (Markowitz 2004: 22-23). Such “messiness” is not meant to imply that deportees are free to construct their lives and identities as they see fit. Rather, it suggests that post-deportation homecoming experiences are dependent upon a complex set of interactions between context *and* agency, self *and* circumstance (Rumbaut and Rumbaut 2005). Any analysis working

to unpack factors leading to divergent post-deportation outcomes should take into consideration the contexts to which deportees return at the national, regional, and local levels *in addition to* deportees' demographic characteristics, personal histories, subjectivities, and agentic behaviors and potential.

Return Migrant Embeddedness

Recent studies from the *Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen* (CIDIN) at *Radboud University* in the Netherlands represent a first systematic attempt to outline the reasons why “going home” is experienced differently by involuntary returnees with different life histories⁵ (Davids and van Houte 2008; Ruben, van Houte, and Davids 2009). This model rejects the notions of “reentry” and “reintegration” utilized elsewhere because they leave little room for migrants' subjective interpretations and responses. Reintegration assumes that migrants were once well integrated in the societies in which they were born, when this is often not the case, especially for child emigrants (Rumbaut 2004). The concept also connotes to many readers that there exists a “dominant” or “mainstream” society into which return migrants can “melt” in their countries-of-origin, when, in fact, nations typically have multiple “pots” within which migrants might construct sites of belonging (Rumbaut 2005).

The CIDIN theory draws upon the notion of *embeddedness* to explain post-return experiences⁶. It approaches the concept from the subjective perspective of human actors, defining embeddedness as “how individuals find and define their position in society, feel a sense

⁵ Other studies have theorized the reintegration of voluntary returnees. Highlights of these studies will be presented throughout the rest of this chapter. For more comprehensive reviews, see Cassarino 2004 and Gmelch 1980.

⁶ Embeddedness is a concept first coined by Karl Polanyi and his colleagues (Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson 1957). When Mark Granovetter (1985) articulated it he proposed a vision of society in which “actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy. Their attempts at purposive action are instead embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations” (487).

of belonging and (imagine) possibilities for participation in society” (Ruben et al. 2009:910). When Granovetter (1985) theorized embeddedness, he focused on the ways humans become *economically* embedded in society, but there are other forms to consider (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Noting this, the CIDIN employs the notion of “mixed embeddedness,” examining how returnees’ degrees of economic, social network, and psychosocial embeddedness interact to produce their overall embeddedness in countries-of-origin (Kloosterman, Van der Leun, and Rath 1999). When overall embeddedness is higher, individuals will have more freedom to craft sustainable and meaningful livelihoods that resemble something like “home.”

Three sets of factors impact the overall embeddedness of involuntary returnees under the CIDIN model. The first set, *individual characteristics* includes returnees’ age, age at migration, socioeconomic background, marital status, gender, ethnicity, and religion. The second set, *migration cycle*, refers to the important ways each stage in the cycle of migration influences migrants’ attitudes, identities and behaviors. The experiences of life prior to migration, original motives for emigration, the degree of acculturation abroad, and the ways migrants were prepared for their returns are noted as relevant to post-return embeddedness. A final set of factors is referred to as *assistance*. Assistance “can be provided before, during, or after return and might include financial assistance (grants, income-generating assistance, travel expenses), material assistance (funding for accommodation, medication, and work materials, as well as non-material (human) assistance (information provision and psychosocial counseling” from several institutions (e.g. host/home governments, NGOS, international organizations)” (Houte et al. 2009:918).

Under the CIDIN model "complex structural forces confront (deportees) as an objective reality that channel them in different directions" (Portes and Rumbaut 2006:101-02). The

strength of this approach rests with its recognition of the importance of the interaction between individual-level characteristics and social context and the importance it places on the role human agency plays in the formation of a sustainable and meaningful life. Context and agency are the heart of the CIDIN theory, but because of the study design, they are explored in a less meaningful way than individual-level factors. The model can be improved—or further articulated—through a more elaborate articulation of the most significant components of the contexts in which migrants become embedded post-return. It can also provide a more detailed explanation of the many creative ways returnees respond to their surroundings, even in the direst situations (Hammond 1999:2004). Transnational ties should receive special attention because they are crucial to understanding many migrants’ post-return embeddedness and adaptive responses (Cassarino 2004: Golash-Boza 2013). What follows is a model of post-deportation embeddedness that works to further develop the CIDIN approach to return migration.

A Model of Post-Deportation Embeddedness

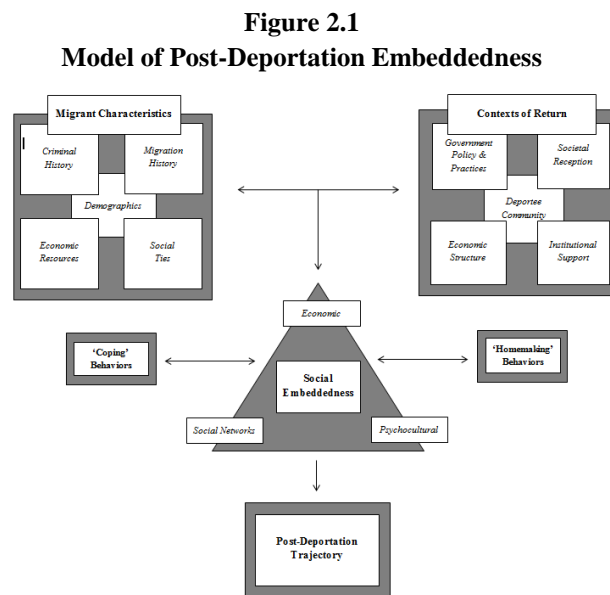


Figure 2.1 represents the model of post-deportation embeddedness that guides the rest of this dissertation. Like the CIDIN conceptualization, it views “going home” not as a particular moment—say, when deportees’ arrive at the airport—but as a two-way *process* that occurs over time. Embeddedness is the outcome of interactions between individual-level characteristics of deportees and the trans/national-, regional-, and local-level contexts of return. These interactions cause deported persons with different life histories to experience different levels of economic, psychosocial, and social network embeddedness. Complex configurations of mixed embeddedness determine deportees’ overall social embeddedness, which, in turn, impacts the freedom deportees have to creatively engage with their social environment. Overall social embeddedness helps predict whether individuals will employ “homemaking” strategies or cope with removal in other ways, like covering their status, managing their mobility, and engaging transnationally. In doing so, it ultimately indicates whether deported persons are able to construct sustainable and meaningful “homes” after return.

This model of deportee embeddedness maintains that interactions between context, their biographies, and their agentic behaviors take place throughout deportees’ lifecourses. Deportees’ behaviors will continue to reproduce or alter the contexts in which they are embedded: and those contexts continue to alter deportees’ experiences of embeddedness. Over time, this iterative process places deportees on what we might call “post-deportation trajectories.” These trajectories resemble the “modes of incorporation” experienced by first-generation immigrants in traditional host countries like the U.S. (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). They “may take a variety of forms—some leading to greater homogenization and solidarity within the society (or within segments of the society), others to greater ethnic differentiation and heterogeneity” (Rumbaut 2005:157). In

other words, post-deportation trajectories help predict whether and how deported persons and their progeny will incorporate “back” into their countries-of-origin in the long-term.

To better understand the social embeddedness of deported persons, it is helpful to unpack the components of the theory. The remainder of this chapter is focused on defining and expounding upon the multiple forms of embeddedness, individual characteristics of deportees, components of the contexts to which deportees return, and the homemaking and coping strategies employed by deportees. It also includes some suggestions on the multiple ways in which deportees’ individual characteristics and contexts of return might impact their social embeddedness. These suggestions emerge from literature on immigrant incorporation, return migration, and deportation as well as the inductive findings from 100 interviews with Salvadoran deportees reported in the latter half of this dissertation. They should be treated as hypotheses to form the basis of future research on post-deportation homecomings.

Forms of Embeddedness

Economic embeddedness refers to the degree to which individuals belong economically in their countries-of-origin. Like all measures of embeddedness, this definition is highly dependent upon deportees’ subjective sense of economic belonging within the context of their particular country-of-citizenship. This includes whether or not they have a sense of economic deprivation relative to other members of the society. At a more foundational level, successful economic embeddedness “requires access to resources, opportunities, and basic services to establish a self-sustained livelihood in conditions of equal rights with other citizens (frijevic, Todorovic, and Grkovic 2004:38). Economically embedded deportees will likely have access to sustainable employment and income. They should have access to food, housing, land,

transportation, healthcare, education, and credit at par with local citizens. Truly sustainable livelihoods would allow deportees the ability to successfully “cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and maintain or enhance their capabilities and assets in the short and long run (De Haan, Kaag, and De Bruijn, 2004)” (Ruben et al. 2009:915).

Social Network Embeddedness

Social network embeddedness refers to whether deported persons are socially connected to and feel a sense of belonging with local citizens in their countries-of-origin. Social ties to locals in the country-of-origin serve a variety of helpful functions for deportees. “Social networks are important for acquiring information, sharing personal and intimate relations with peers, and discussing shared beliefs and values. They are also important to strengthen psychosocial well-being as part of identity maintenance. These networks add to social capital, comprising features of social organization, reciprocity, networks, information flows, and social safety nets that emerge from the relationships amongst individuals. Social capital could lead to a more efficient and stable position of individuals in society” (Ruben et al. 2009:915).

Ruben et al. (2009) claim that the *quality* of a returnee’s ties is as important, and perhaps more important, than the *quantity* of ties in returnees’ local network. They imply that it is important for involuntary return migrants to have social ties based upon intimacy and trust. It is true that strong attachments to social networks can help individuals develop a common “culture,” or set of shared values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors. It can provide them a sense of solidarity and purpose toward a shared goal, like changing a set of policies that affect the population. Strong ties also often rely on “reciprocity exchanges” and “enforceable trust” that can provide deportees access to material benefits like jobs, housing, or loans. It is also the case, however, that

weak ties linked to external social networks can provide important sources of information for migrants to obtain jobs, resources, and social support (Granovetter 1973). It therefore seems that deportees who are the most embedded along social network lines will have a variety of both strong *and* weak ties in the country-of-origin.

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) demonstrate that social capital is often romanticized in sociological literature in ways that contribute to the “over-socialization of man” conceptualizations Granovetter (1985) was trying to avoid. There are at least two important ways social ties may actually *inhibit* the overall social embeddedness of deported persons. *First*, some social ties may have a “negative” influence on deportees. Individuals may be involved in violent or dysfunctional relationships or they could become connected to social networks engaged in deviant behaviors (see Menjívar 2000). Connection to these types of networks may actually constitute a mode of social network embeddedness. But negative social ties may also reduce deportees’ overall sense of belonging in their countries-of-origin. *Second*, strong ties, whether interpreted as “positive” or “negative” in nature, can constrain human agency through the imposition of expectations and demands. This may not be problematic for most deportees: the norms of reciprocity and exchange may reflect deportees’ desired way of being in the world. Some other deportees may feel their agentic potential is constrained because they must meet the expectations of others closely connected to them. These people may struggle to find or craft sites of personal belonging.

Psychocultural Embeddedness

A final form of embeddedness is the psychocultural. This measure represents deportees’ ability to express their identities, cultural beliefs, and cultural practices freely and with the

acceptance of the members of their countries-of-origin. Identity, or the view of the self, is a fluid concept that is constantly “acquiring new meanings and forms through interactions with social contexts and within historical moments” (Ghorashi 2003:27). When migrants settle abroad, they can take on social identities prevalent within their host country, including national, ethnic, and racial identities. They may also begin to acculturate to their host country by adopting some or all of the ways the members of that society see and move through the world. For instance, they may consciously or unconsciously take on the language, dietary habits, gender norms, religion, and leisure activities of the host society.

As the CIDIN research team highlights, “complex situations emerge when returnees” new hybrid identities upon return do not necessarily fit into a home society that has also undergone significant changes (Ruben et al. 2009:916). Deportees with foreign identities and cultural practices may be accepted in some contexts. In others they are stigmatized, discriminated against, and are the object of abuses from police, security, (para)military forces, and gangs. Migrants may try to adapt the local culture and establish hybrid identities, but this is often not possible in the face of such repression. Negative societal reactions can create a sense of “contextual dissonance” which negatively affects the mental health of deportees (Rumbaut 1994). Alternatively, it can lead deportees to retain or form reactive identities that serve to maintain their difference from the local population (Rumbaut 2008). Deportees’ low levels of psychocultural embeddedness can then prevent them from becoming embedded in the local economy and local social networks.

According to Appadurai (1996), “being free to construct one’s identity...and having this identity accepted in a wider society, enhances the feeling of belonging and attachment to specific localities (Appadurai, 1996). Thus, for deportees to feel like they truly belong in their

“homelands” they must experience psychocultural acceptance. Once acceptance of deportees’ difference is provided, they may be more likely to feel a sense of “confluence” between their own identities and practices and those of the country-of-origin. Under less pressure to change, they will be more likely to adapt to the customs of the local society. They will be more likely to experience return as a “homecoming.”

Individual Characteristics

Demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics like age, socioeconomic background, marital status, parental status, and ethnic, racial and religious identities all likely impact how they will experience, respond to, and interpret the process of going “home.” Through the vast majority of deportees are male there also remains some variation on the basis of gender (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2014). Preliminary evidence based on a cross-national study of rejected asylum seekers found that women and single parents are particularly troubled psychosocially upon return, while deportees with families fare better (Ruben et al. 2009). People with higher levels of education, and younger age experience higher levels of social network and economic embeddedness. The impact of religious status was not analyzed, but it may play a significant role in post-return contexts with high levels of religious conflict.

Migration Histories

Migration histories also play important roles in post-deportation outcomes. “Boyd and Grieco (2003) distinguish three stages in the process of migration: the pre-migration stage, the stage of transition across state boundaries, and the post-migration stage in the new country. In

each stage, economic, political, and personal opportunities influence the embeddedness prospects of migrants” (Ruben et al. 2009:917). The *reason for initial migration* is critically important in post-deportation outcomes. Those that fled war or persecution may have experienced heightened levels of trauma prior to migration and may be more motivated to stay abroad than those that migrated for economic reasons. Those that migrated for economic reasons may have dire financial situations in need of remedy and when they return, they may return to the same impoverished economic condition that influenced their initial departure. Those that migrated as students or entrepreneurs are less likely to be removed than the former populations, but if they are, they will likely encounter fewer problems becoming embedded upon return.

Age at emigration and *length of time abroad* predict to a large extent the degree to which they will incorporate to the host country (see Rumbaut 2004). Individuals who migrated at young ages generally have less memories of and transnational attachment to their country-of-origin than older migrants. Because of their heightened affiliation with the host country, younger migrants and migrants who spent many years abroad are more likely to experience a “culture shock” upon return. They have a longer “social distance” to travel in order to achieve a sense of psychocultural embeddedness upon return (Rumbaut and Rumbaut 2005). They may struggle to become embedded in social networks and find employment because their ties to the country are relatively weak. They may also struggle to ignite their agentic potential (Cerase 1974). As King (1986: 19) claims:

If (the duration of stay abroad) is very short, say less than a year or two, the migrant will have gained too little experience to be of any use in promoting modernisation back home. If the period of absence is very long, returnees may be so alienated from their origin society, or they may be so old, that again the influence exerted will be small. Somewhere in between, an optimum length of absence might be found whereby the absence is sufficiently long to have influenced the migrant and allowed him to absorb certain experiences and values, and yet sufficiently short that he still has time and energy upon return to utilize his newly acquired skills and attitudes.

The *age at deportation* removal is also important in understanding how migration histories influence post-deportation embeddedness. Individuals who return as children are a particularly vulnerable population. If child migrants experience a warm context of return, they may become socially embedded more quickly than adults. However, if they are not handled with care, there is no institutional support facilitating their reinsertion, and they do not have a strong social network to which they might return, they may become a socially and economically disenfranchised population in their home countries. They may experience significant psychological trauma and may struggle with mental health and substance abuse problems. Adult deportees will also experience traumas associated with removal, but they are typically in a better position than children to maneuver through society in the absence of external forms of support.

Criminal Histories

Several factors related to deportees' criminal histories may be relevant to their post-deportation experience. In some post-deportation contexts, individuals with actual or presumed criminal histories are highly stigmatized and ostracized. If they originally fled as *fugitives*, they may face incarceration, persecution, or death upon return. If they were involved in *crimes abroad* and news of their behaviors spread transnationally, their identities may be tarnished in their communities when they return. If they were involved in *gangs* while abroad or carry *markers associated with gangs*, like tattoos, they may become the targets of gangs and police forces upon return. *Time incarcerated* may have impacted their identities, worldviews, and expectations.

Economic Resources

Deportees carry varying levels of economic resources that may be useful upon return. *Financial capital* can help facilitate their reinsertion. This can take the form of remittances previously sent from abroad, shelter and material goods purchased with remittances, and money saved abroad. Any financial capital they attained can help them secure housing, food, transportation, and other basic necessities to construct a sustainable livelihood. The level of migrants' *human capital* can also help them secure employment upon return. Those with higher levels of education may be able to secure higher paying jobs. Those with knowledge of the native language will more easily acquire employment in the local labor market. Individuals with bilingual skills may find employment in the tourist industry and other industries, like telecommunications firms, that service foreign nationals. Other marketable skills, including computer, construction, agriculture, and welding, will also assist deportees become economically embedded upon return.

Social Ties

A final factor to consider is deportees' social ties. Under the right conditions social ties can provide capital, connections, knowledge, and comfort (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). As such, individuals who have social ties to their country-of-citizenship will have a significant advantage upon return. If deportees have good relationships with their family members in their country-of-origin, they will likely have a place to live, help finding a job, access to their friendship cliques, and will be provided emotional support. If deportees' primary social ties are abroad, they may attempt an immediate re-emigration or they may engage with their families transnationally via phone calls, emails, and social media (Golash-Boza 2013; Hagan et al. 2008). They may struggle

to develop a positive attitude toward finding or developing a “home” in their country-of-origin and may thus maintain low levels of embeddedness.

Contexts of Return

Individual-level characteristics do not operate in a vacuum. Much like macro-structural *contexts of exit* and *contexts of reception* influence migrants’ modes of incorporation into host societies (Portes and Rumbaut 2006), post-deportation embeddedness and trajectories are structured by the political, economic, and institutional contexts to which deported persons return. Deportees return to not only a national context, but also regional and local *contexts of return*, which may rural or urban and may be impacted to varying degrees by transnational and global influences (Cassarino 2004; Murphy 2002). Each context is composed of a particular set of features that include governmental policies and practices, societal perceptions, the structure of the labor market, and the availability of institutional support, and the presence of an informal community of support, especially among other deportees.

Government Policy and Practices

Governments play a critical role in the ways in which deported persons are treated. In immigrant-receiving societies, government policies “determine whether sizeable immigration flows can begin at all and, once under way, the forms they will take” (Portes and Rumbaut 2006:93). They can actively encourage, passively accept, or formally exclude whole categories of immigrants from entering their nation and, in doing so, determine the level of citizenship. Since deported migrants are citizens of the countries to which they return, their governments cannot control them in this way. Some states get around this by regularly refusing to accept

deportees back or are slow to process their returns. This can occur to whole categories of potential deportees or on a case-by-case basis. Countries considered to be “*generally uncooperative*” with the U.S. include Cuba, Vietnam, Iran, Laos, and Pakistan (The Associated Press 2012). In such cases, deportees are released from immigration detention, but they are relatively rare. For example, of the total 383,031 total removals and 474,275 returns from the U.S. in 2010, only 3,883 persons were allowed to stay because of their government’s refusal to cooperate (The Associated Press 2012; USDHS 2013).

It is more common that governments will control deportees’ membership after removal through their discourse, level of government support provided, and deployment of military and police forces. Governments can employ a variety of tactics in support of or against deportee populations. Ways in which they *support* include framing migrants as national heroes and providing services to help deportees attain appropriate documentation, housing, transportation, employment, health services, and mental health services. They demonstrate *passive acceptance* toward deportees when there is a lack of national discourse around deportation issues. Passive governments may provide some reinsertion assistance, but it will be limited. Finally, when are *hostile* toward deportees, they will frame them as threats to the society, referring to them as criminals or unwanted desirables who, for example, return to take jobs away from non-migrants. Hostile states deploy police forces to monitor the activities of deportee populations. They may also torture, kill, or detain deportees upon arrival.

Societal Reception

Assimilation literature has documented the importance of a lack of discrimination for the incorporation of immigrant populations in their societies (Rumbaut 2005). The same is true for

deportees. In order for them to become embedded, they must experience acceptance by society. *Societal reception* is the way in which the local populations in countries-of-origin view and treat deportees. Society can retain prejudiced or non-prejudiced attitudes toward deportees. When there are low levels of prejudice, deportees should be able to move through their daily rounds without feeling stigmatized. They should have relatively few problems finding jobs or establishing relationships on the basis of their deported status. It can also help mitigate the low levels of psychocultural embeddedness, facilitating their overall social embeddedness.

Higher levels of prejudice can emanate from state discourse and through more organic processes of stereotyping. Deportees will likely be defined as foreigners, outsiders, or threats to national security. They will feel stigmatized on the basis of their deportee status. Deportees will also become more easily become the objects of discrimination when they seek employment or social services. They may become the objects of state surveillance and violence from the state, vigilantes, gangs, and others threatened by their presence. Trust between deportees and the local population will likely be low, which will produce fragile social network ties. Highly prejudiced deportees will thus experience low levels of social network and employment embeddedness. The message that they are undesired elements in their countries-of-origin will also reinforce low levels of psychocultural embeddedness many deportees already feel upon return.

Economic Structure

The economic structure of the country-of-origin highly affects the ways in which deportees will experience, define, and respond to their return. Several components of this structure are relevant. The *stage in the business cycle*, the *types of industries* available, and the *labor demand* within those industries will determine whether deportees will be able to access

formal employment. The size and forms of the informal economy will determine what types of alternative employment deportees can access if the formal labor market is difficult to access.

The *typification of deportees* will determine if there is a match between the perceived characteristics of deportees' characteristics and the preferences of employers. If deportees are perceived to have poor character, no tangible skills, and unacceptable forms of education they may be regulated to menial labor and the informal economy. They may struggle to find any source of local economic support and may find themselves dependent upon remittances from abroad, local sources of housing and financial support, or they can become homeless. On the other hand, if deportees are believed to have a strong work ethic and hold a set of skills useful for a particular industry, they may become a form of preferred labor (Brooks and McKail 2008). Deportees can be typified differently within the same context of reception, and will be channeled into different segments of the labor market depending upon how they have been characterized (Bonacich 1972). Positively typification can facilitate their economic embeddedness. However, as Portes and Rumbaut (2006:94) claim, "this positive image may grant them preferential access to entry-level jobs, although there is no guarantee that they will be able to rise above them." They may never be able to fully rise above a spoiled identity even if they are valued for their labor in particular industries.

A final set of contextual factors related to the economic structure is *wage differentials* and *economic standard of living differentials* between the country-of-origin and the host country. If deportees spent significant time abroad, they may most likely become accustomed to receiving relatively higher wages. They also may be used to achieving a higher standard of living with the income they garner. Thus, even if such immigrants are able to locate employment that will sustain them economically upon return, they may struggle to feel a sense of economic belonging

or embeddedness. They may behave as though they are not embedded because their expectations are considerably higher. This sense can reinforce low levels of psychocultural embeddedness and reduce overall embeddedness.

Institutional Support

A third contextual factor is institutional support. As an involuntarily returned population, deportees are particularly vulnerable. They often return with little to no income and no material possessions. Some return to families and other informal social support networks that can help facilitate their return. Others do not have such ties. In many contexts institutional support provided directly to deportees is non-existent. However, some contexts of return do have institutional supports put in place by their governments, NGOS, and international organizations to help deportees in need of aid. They may provide orientations of the country-of-origin financial assistance for transportation, housing, medication, and other needs. They sometimes offer social workers who help deportees obtain necessary documentation, enroll in school, access medical and mental health services, job training, and connections to employers.

In immigrant receiving societies, refugee assistance programs play a major role in facilitating the relatively successful incorporation of refugee populations (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Deportee reintegration programs do not seem to be as successful. In many contexts, the support is minimal or it is poorly implemented (D'onofrio 2004). In these situations, deportees end up navigating return on their own even when there is institutional support available. Researchers thus need to assess the forms and quality of the services provided to deportees in analyses of institutional support. Programs that are especially helpful will provide continuation of services after deportees leave the airport. Most deportees from this dissertation claimed that

services providing job training and connections to potential employers would be particularly helpful to their adjustment.

Deportee Community

A final contextual variable to be considered is related to the availability of communities of support. This is distinct from the familial and friendship ties deportees have to their countries-of-origin. The form of community referred to here is meant to be akin to the semi-bounded ethnic communities often found in host countries. It is imagined as a “deportee community” but it may also include other persons who can join together with deportees to create a source of identity, a common culture, a social safety net, a source of information about jobs and services, and a space through which better treatment or rights might be demanded. In many contexts no such community will exist, forcing deportees to rely on themselves, their personal networks, and any available institutional support. However, if it does exist or if it can be created, the community could help facilitate something similar to “selective acculturation” that is found in immigrant receiving societies (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Deportee communities could help returning deportees find and craft spaces of belonging in societies that might otherwise feel foreign.

Homemaking and Coping Behaviors

When contexts of return and individual level characteristics interact with one another, they can produce a variety of different form of embeddedness among deportees returning across national contexts and within particular countries-of-origin. The model of deportee embeddedness argues that high levels of “mixed embeddedness” across the economic, social network, and

psychocultural domains will produce high levels of overall social embeddedness. When this occurs, deportees will have more liberty to use their agentic potential to craft sustainable livelihoods, including sites of belonging that hold meaning for them. They will likely engage in “*homemaking*” behaviors that further facilitate their embeddedness in the society. Such behaviors can conceivably include establishing romantic relationships and friendship ties, having children. It could include starting their own business or working toward a promotion. It might mean getting involved politically by pressuring for their rights or engaging more generally in the political process. They may become involved in civil society, volunteering their time, for example. The particular “homemaking” behaviors in which deportees can vary greatly, but what must be present is an *attitude* toward making the country-of-origin a site of belonging.

Positive attitudes toward homemaking will only be present when the degree of social embeddedness experienced by deportees is perceived to be sufficient. When it is low, deportees will likely feel constrained. This does not mean that they will fail to adapt to their surroundings. On the contrary, deportees will develop a set of *coping strategies* to manage their identities and survive materially and emotionally after deportation. Coping strategies deportees employ are analogous to the employment of “strategic visibility” undocumented migrants employ to manage their social existence in host countries (Bailey et al. 2002; Coutin 2003). One form of coping strategy is *covering*. Covering strategies can include changing their appearance, working on reducing an accent, or learning local slang or colloquiums to hide the fact that they were once abroad. Deportees may also cope by *managing mobility*. They might avoid particular locations in their country or their neighborhoods where they are at most at risk. If they can afford it, they may take taxis instead of public transportation or they may take longer bus routes to avoid unsafe

neighborhoods. Some deportees might even limit the time they spend outside of their residences or only leave their residences when they are with trusted social ties.

A final set of coping strategies to be considered here is *transnational behaviors*. According to Levitt (Levitt 1998, 4) transnational social ties help migrants “feel linked to one another by their common place-of-origin and their shared religious and social ties.” Cassarino (2004) argued that transnational social ties help deportees retain a sense of social belonging in the world. Deportees often engage transnationally because of a profound sense of loss and disconnection with their loved ones they were forced to leave behind (Hagan et al. 2008). They also do so to cope with the alienation they encounter in their countries-of-origin after removal (Golash-Boza 2013). Forms of transnational behaviors in which they might engage include telephone calls, emails, social media, and the receipt of remittances. Such behaviors do not necessarily prevent migratory populations from incorporating, or becoming embedded in their countries-of-origin. They can, however, represent a form of “reactivity” against the conditions of the society in which the migrants find themselves (Rumbaut 2004). This reactivity acts like a self-fulfilling prophecy, reinforcing low levels of social embeddedness after deportation.

Post-Deportation Trajectories

The factors that influence deportees’ homecoming experiences are clearly numerous. The sheer volume of factors disrupts the pervasive notion that all deportees will follow similar pathways after removal (Tucker 1994). When they mix and mesh in different contexts deportees with different biographies will experience different levels of post-deportation embeddedness. Individuals that have high levels of post-deportation can be argued to have either returned to something that looks “home-like.” They have relatively more freedom to construct a life that

sustains them economically and provides them a sense of social belonging. When embeddedness is lower, however, migrants will more likely feel alienated, marginalized, constrained, or suffocated. They will struggle to survive economically and will be less likely to perceive the country-of-origin as a “home.” Feeling a sense of “coerced homelessness” upon return (Rumbaut and Rumbaut 2005), they may interpret deportation as an exile or banishment from the “home” formerly constructed abroad (Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012). They can end up becoming a sort of “cultural commuters,” in which they bouncing back and forth between different geographic locations in search of a place and space that feels like home (Gmelch 1980).

It is possible to understand deportees’ degrees of embeddedness by assessing the trajectories they reportedly followed after return to their countries-of-origin. Such “post-deportation trajectories” are expected to vary depending upon the contexts to which deportees return, their personal biographies, and the ways in which they respond to their experience of embeddedness. Existing post-deportation literature suggests that most deportees will struggle to attain a sense of social, economic, and psychocultural belonging. Such persons may re-emigrate, isolate themselves from the wider society, become dependent upon remittances from abroad, find themselves engaged in precarious forms of labor, or become involved in deviant social networks. Other deportees may experience higher levels of overall embeddedness. They may form new families, start small businesses, and be able to work toward upward economic mobility. They may not even be that successful materially, but because they feel they belong, they have more space in their lives to either cultivate the art of acceptance or to organize with others to improve their social standing through mutual aid and collective action. After all, as James Baldwin wrote in his novel *Giovanni’s Room* (1956), “perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition.”

CHAPTER 3

The Salvadoran Case

Just as the Statue of Liberty serves as an aspirational symbol of immigrant inclusion in the U.S., the national monument *Hermano Lejano* (Distant Brother) represents a symbol of transnational fraternity among Salvadorans. In 1994, Hermano Lejano was constructed to greet returning nationals traveling from the *Comalapa International Airport* to the capital city of San Salvador. It was composed of two white concrete arches, an exposed steel-beam foundational structure, and a large red placard that reads *Hermano Bienvenido a Casa* (Brother, Welcome Home). The monument was placed beside one of the city's few highway overpasses in the middle of a traffic circle connecting several key industrial and residential *colonias*. The monument's manifest function was to recognize the sacrifices of migrants and it signifies to them that they are important members of the national family. However, Hermano Lejano has also been at the epicenter of a charged debate over what it means to be a Salvadoran and which nationals are welcome inside El Salvador (Baker-Cristales 2004).

During and after the bloody civil war that plagued El Salvador from 1980 to 1992, as much as twenty-five percent of the population fled the country and settled on the exterior (Gammage 2007). Nationalistic discourse initially framed these emigrants as communist sympathizers and cowardly deserters who refused to participate in the domestic struggle for power and the rebuilding of the country (Coutin 2007). Rhetoric dramatically changed, however, as government actors, financial institutions, and media analysts began to observe the staggering role economic remittances from abroad were playing in the post-war economy. These remittances, which accounted for 16 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product in 2013

(World Bank 2013), served as the catalyst to redefine Salvadoran emigrants as national heroes. The Salvadoran state began a neoliberal campaign of “transnational governmentality” to encourage continued emigration and ensure a massive influx of remittances. *Hermano Lejano* serves as a physical representation of such trans/nation-building (Baker-Cristales 2004).

Armando Calderón Sol, a founding member of the right-wing party Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) and former mayor of San Salvador, presided over the construction of Hermano Lejano as part of his successful bid for the presidency in 1994. His administration (1994-1999) became known for its neoliberal approach to post-war reconstruction. They enticed foreign investment by removing barriers to trade, promoted the *maquiladora* industry, privatized industry, public works, and social services, and invested in infrastructure to facilitate trade. Emigrant labor became crucial to this development scheme. Migrants’ economic value was dependent upon their sustained distance from El Salvador, so it was important that they be considered members of, but not physically in, Salvadoran society⁷ (Coutin 2007). Hermano Lejano helped this effort by imagining its post-war economic saviors as principally male migrants who would be warmly welcomed ‘home’ if they were to ever return. Of course, the placement of the monument beside one of San Salvador’s only highway overpasses connected to the country’s only international airport was also a subtle nod to its more instrumentalist function: to cultivate a diaspora affectively invested in ‘modernizing’ El Salvador to make it “more competitive in the global marketplace” (Baker-Cristales 2004:99; Coutin 2007).

According to Baker-Cristales (2004), “the monument was meant to encapsulate and to render in a public fashion the government’s attitude toward Salvadorans living abroad...” However, nearly a decade after its erection, Hermano Lejano, and arguably its message, began to

⁷ Baker-Cristales shows that this need to keep the migrant at a distance was the reason Salvadorans witnessed the birth of *hermano lejano*, not *hermano cercano*.

deteriorate. The monument was beset by “fallen letters, broken tiles, a useless fountain, and graffiti” (Wright 2008). In 2012, Norman Quijano—then mayor of San Salvador and ARENA’s 2014 candidate for the presidency—oversaw an \$187,000 renovation of the national symbol (Sosa 2012). Hermano Lejano’s concrete arches were removed to reveal dramatic new scaffolding, which were made spectacular by the addition of new fountains and bold blue spotlights reminiscent of the Salvadoran flag. El Salvador’s ‘National Artist’ Fernando Llorc was commissioned to encase the monument in a brightly-colored ceramic-tile mosaic featuring nationalist symbols from capital and the countryside, including the *Monumento al Divino Salvador del Mundo*, the *Catedral Metropolitana de San Salvador*, and a peasant carrying an abundance of produce. Llorc also constructed a separate ceramic-tile sculpture, *Abrazo Fraternal* (Fraternal Embrace), of a woman with her arms stretched wide open, offering what he claimed to be “a welcome to distant siblings, a warm welcome, a welcome with love” (González 2012).

Hermano Lejano’s renovation renews the Salvadoran state’s original message to its emigrants. It “mythologizes the homeland,” permitting migrants to feel partially ‘at home’ even as they create new lives abroad (Rodríguez 2005). It ‘sells nostalgia,’ by encouraging them to remit their earnings in exchange for the hope that El Salvador remains the site of their natural and perpetual belonging (Coutin 2007). It cultivates an “ideology of return,” promising the metaphorical embrace of a maternal *país*. Not all Salvadoran migrants are able to return or desire to return to their country of citizenship, but Hermano Lejano visibly insinuates that if they do they should expect to receive a warm welcome home from the state and society. Unfortunately, as this dissertation shows, this image of being “at home” upon return is sharply contrasted against the reality of return for many migrants deported from the U.S. to El Salvador.

To understand the multiple and divergent homecoming experiences, homemaking strategies, and, ultimately, post-deportation trajectories of Salvadoran deportees, it is necessary to understand the historical and contemporary contexts in which deported persons are embedded. This chapter reviews the *context of exit* that caused large numbers of migrants to leave El Salvador and the *context of reception* they faced in the U.S. in order to make sense of the *context of return* they encounter after deportation. Each of these contexts is conceived as a semi-distinct *social field*, defined as sets of “multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004:1009). In the Salvadoran case, social fields are influenced by the existence of a transnational social field between the U.S. and El Salvador. *Transnational fields* link nation-states through the movement of people, goods, information, and culture across international borders. They interact with other social fields across global, national, and local levels to produce perpetually emergent *context of return* within which deportees’ post-deportation “homecoming” experiences and “homemaking” strategies can ultimately be elucidated (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). The following discussion thus focuses on the emergence of the transnational social field throughout the history of the Salvadoran people to contextualize the experiences of contemporary deportees.

The Context of Exit

Colonization and Political Independence

The territory now known as Central America was once populated by three primary indigenous populations: the Pipil, the Nahuatl, and the Lencas. These were largely agriculturally self-sufficient populations that divided land based on membership in cooperative groups rather

than private property ownership. This arrangement changed when Spanish conquistadores invaded and overtook natives' land and transformed them into privatized estates. Starting around 1524, indigenous people were first uprooted from their villages en masse. They were forced to labor in a system of *repatrimiento* which mimicked slavery in most ways except workers were not formally considered property under the law (Baker-Cristales 2004). Over the next three centuries of political and economic domination, indigenous groups were increasingly uprooted from their lands, forced to work for non-native settlers, and required to pay tribute to the Spanish crown. Indigenous forms of self-governance were virtually obliterated as the vice-royalty of Spain assumed administrative control. By 1609, the region was named the *Capitanía General de Guatemala* and San Salvador was identified as a key center of administrative control.

Independence in Central America was a process that unfolded throughout the 19th century. As Mexico engaged in its bloody war of independence, local elites (most of whom were foreign settlers who desired autonomous control over the region) within the *Capitanía de Guatemala* led a series of non-violent protests against the Spanish crown (Karnes 1961; Lindo-Fuentes 1990; Woodward 1985). These efforts, especially in Mexico, eventually de-legitimized Spanish political control. By 1821, Spain formally recognized the liberation of the entire region. Mexico became an independent state and the *Federal Republic of Central America* was formed by the southern provinces of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Chiapas. When this federation dissolved in 1838 after twenty years of civil war, El Salvador was free. Its leaders declared it an independent republic in February of 1841. The country maintained its own government until 1896, when it united with Honduras and Nicaragua in the forming the *Greater Republic of Central America*. This union disbanded in 1898 and, since then, El Salvador has remained a politically sovereign state (Karnes 1961).

National Development, Oligarchic Consolidation, and Early Transnational Ties

As coffee came into competitive demand in the global arena in the 19th century, landed elites focused on its production and exportation for the development of the Salvadoran economy. Eventually a few hundred “mostly white” families – known as the “Fourteen Families” – came to control the vast majority of coffee-producing land (Lindo-Fuentes 1990:152). They consolidated their economic power into oligarchic control over the nation and enacted legislation that favored their interests over those of the peasantry. The government provided coffee producers with lucrative tax incentives. Coffee barons were permitted to overtake native lands and transform them into large plantations. Anti-vagrancy laws forced many peasants into working in slave-like conditions on the land that they once controlled. The *Guardía Nacional* (National Guard) was created in 1912 to patrol rural lands and suppress peasant dissent. Entire indigenous communities were destroyed in the process. Displaced natives were forced into seasonal migrant streams, squatter communities near San Salvador, and more permanent dislocation throughout Central America (Hamilton and Chinchilla 1991).

By the early 20th century coffee replaced indigo as El Salvador’s primary export and became responsible for the country’s more complete integration into the world economy (Lindo-Fuentes 1990; Paige 1993; Williams 1994). Investors and other explorers from the U.S. had already begun to explore, utilize labor, extract bananas and other crops, and expand transportation routes in the region. Increasing coffee prices, however, enticed large-scale investment from North America for the first time. Immigrants from the U.S. and from Europe began to settle in El Salvador, where they often started out in merchant classes but eventually married their way into elite classes (Lindo-Fuentes 1990). They differed from traditional coffee

elites in their greater support of democratization and economic development (Paige 1993). They and their children helped stimulate a liberal turn in Salvadoran politics, which lasted from approximately 1871 to 1927 (Haggerty 1988; Lindo-Fuentes 1990). During this period, the government invested in modernizing and investment-attracting infrastructure, such as railroads and ports. A labor movement also successfully emerged, which earned “relaxed labor policies ... [such as] the right to unionize, and the eight-hour workday” (Menjívar 2000:39). By the 1920s El Salvador had earned the international reputation as the most economically progressive country in Central America (Woodward 1985).

The Great Depression devastatingly highlighted the danger of economic dependence on a monocultural export for the Salvadoran economy. During the Depression, international coffee prices plummeted 62 percent (Dunkerley 1988) and overall value of Salvadoran exports and imports dropped over 50 percent (Blumer-Thomas 1988). The Salvadoran state faced a severe budget deficit. Unfortunately, elites who benefited most from the economic boom of the 1920s had not sufficiently reinvested their earnings in the country (Baker-Cristales 2004; Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008). In fact, they “*disinvested* millions in profits, which [they] kept in banks and investments in the United States and Europe” (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008:6, emphasis mine). As a result the peasantry and urban poor bore the brunt of rapid economic decline. Rates of unemployment and underemployment skyrocketed, peasants’ wages sharply decreased, landlessness rose, and tensions between workers and landowners grew exponentially.

The depression only temporarily challenged the power of the Salvadoran oligarchy. In 1931, the country held its first free presidential election. A mild reformist, Arturo Araujo, was elected under the promise of land reform. However, later that year, Araujo’s vice president and minister of war, Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, staged a coup and seized control of the

government. Under Martínez's thirteen year authoritarian rule (1931-1944), violent repression escalated to previously unparalleled levels. When unrest escalated among peasants in Western coffee-producing regions, Martínez ordered the murder of an estimated 10,000 to 40,000 mostly indigenous peasants. Tens-of-thousands of people also fled as de facto refugees, settling mostly in Honduras. The atrocity, now known as *La Matanza* (The Massacre), set the tone for the next five decades of military-oligarchic domination in El Salvador. Native culture was repressed and the peasantry's mobilization was erased from the historical record (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008; Tilly 2005). While it is true that efforts to modernize the economy were made under Martínez and his successors, they failed to reduce El Salvador's dependence on coffee and increasing reliance on U.S. investment. By 1940, the U.S. was purchasing 84.7 percent of the country's coffee exports (Torres Rivas 1993). The roots of the U.S.-El Salvador transnation had clearly been planted and vastly unequal economic relations underpinning social life in the country remained.

Industrialization, Urbanization, and Economic Dependency

In the decades following WWII, the military-oligarchic alliance experimented with industrialization and protectionism to diversify and grow the economy. Starting in 1950, the state offered tax exceptions for infant industries. In the early 1960s, it instituted a regional form of *import substitution industrialization* (ISI) along with Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica through the *Central American Common Market* (CACM). The CACM enacted low tariffs on imports from member states and imposed a high common tariff on imports from non-member states. Perhaps inadvertently, this strategy attracted large-scale investment from the U.S., Japan, and Europe. The U.S. sent unprecedented levels of aid, financing most of CACM

institutions, regional transportation routes, and small-scale development projects. These investments prompted a shift toward exportation. New crops and consumer goods—including sugar, cotton, beef, processed foods, and textiles—were manufactured. Salvadoran laborers began working in foreign-owned factories in free-trade zones and San Salvador for the first time.

El Salvador was quickly becoming the most industrialized country in Central America. Several notable gains had been made in Salvadoran society. The labor force increased and incomes rose leading to a 21.2 percent increase in the per capita GDP (Blumer-Thomas 1988). The Salvadoran government was also able to finance its own modernization projects, like paving streets, constructing bridges, improving electricity generation, and enhancing of medical, housing, and sanitation programs (Menjívar 2000). Such gains were incapable, however, of either altering dependence on coffee or transforming the economic patterns in which many elites engaged. Profiteers continued to invest earnings outside of El Salvador, while taking advantage of a tax system that did little to redistribute wealth (Menjívar 2000). They also regularly vacationed, studied, and settled abroad (Córdova 1996). By 1960, a few thousand settled in the U.S. and by the end of the decade the population had reached over 15,000 (Menjívar 2000).

Meanwhile, population changes and the mechanization of agriculture contributed to growing unemployment among the Salvadoran peasantry. Land evictions grew at astounding rates (Haggerty 1988; Simon and Stephens 1982). Uprooted peasants began to migrate en masse to urban centers in El Salvador. Small numbers of peasants and manual laborers also started going to the U.S. Some laborers “passed themselves off as Mexican” in order to be contracted under the *Bracero Program* which operated in the U.S. from 1942 to 1964 (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001:44). Significantly more people crossed into Honduras such that by 1969 at least 300,000 displaced mostly rural Salvadorans were regionally displaced. A bloody border dispute

known as the “Guerra del Fútbol” (Soccer War) forcibly repatriated 150,000 back to El Salvador. Facing a lack of employment and housing, they joined seasonal migrant streams, were forced into rapidly growing slums, and contributed to emergent underground economies (Haggerty 1988; Pearce 1986). The Salvadoran government did little to respond to the needs of repatriated persons or the rest of the rural and displaced populations.

The global recession of the 1970s shocked El Salvador. As the prices of oil skyrocketed, world coffee prices sharply dropped and widespread disease destroyed cotton crops. The cost to manufacture products climbed, inflation increased 12.8 percent a year between 1970 and 1977, and overall income fell (Weeks 1985). Foreign demand for Salvadoran goods decreased and investments in the Salvadoran economy declined. International deficits increased and access to foreign credit plummeted, causing a national budget crisis. The Salvadoran government and economic elites responded like in earlier periods of malaise. The industrial sector operated tax-free and income taxes for the wealthy remained low. Conversely, farm subsidies were cut, wages for the rural poor declined, and landlessness escalated. Minor land reforms were instituted in 1980, but they were futile when compared to the damage done to poor sectors of Salvadoran society (Lehoucq 1982).

During the economic declines of the 1970s, more Salvadoran laborers pursued job opportunities in the U.S. (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001). Unlike the earlier waves, this population contained mostly working class and poor Salvadorans. Some immigrants were sponsored by U.S. companies operating in El Salvador, like Sony and Texas Instruments (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001). Others were offered positions as domestic servants for U.S. business-people and diplomats who regularly visited El Salvador. After initial pioneers settled a process of chain migration quickly ensued as family members of settled migrants migrated to

reunite with loved ones (Gammage 2007). Small enclaves formed and grew in cities such as San Francisco, Washington D.C., and Long Island (Landolt 2001; Mahler 1995 and 1996). Most of this population settled in Los Angeles, however, where they became the base for the large ethnic enclave that would form there during the emergent Salvadoran civil war (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001).

Civil War and U.S. Political Intervention

By the end of the “developmentalist” period in El Salvador “over two-thirds of the population received less than 2 percent of the disposable income, while less than 2 percent possessed one-third of the income” (Lehoucq 1982:1). Between 30 and 37 percent of the total population – and 65 percent of the rural population – was landless in 1975 (Simon and Stephens 1982). 33 percent of the total population lived in slums, where they contributed to a threefold increase in the informal economy between 1961 and 1975 (Pearce 1986). Rural mobilization and unrest escalated as military funding continued to increase. Conditions were ripe for revolution (Prosterman and Riedinger 1987; Paige 1996).

As the history of La Matanza indicated, military and paramilitary groups had suppressed political mobilization in rural areas of El Salvador. However, when Carlos Humberto Romero fraudulently rose to the presidency in 1977, he unleashed an unprecedented “wave of repression” against suspected rebels and leftists (LeoGrande 1981:30). As disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial murders rapidly increased, hundreds of thousands of people rose up in peaceful protest. This caught the attention of the international community, prompting the Carter Administration to temporarily cut off military aid to the country (OAS 1978). Three military-civilian juntas subsequently seized control of El Salvador between 1979 and 1980, promising

economic reforms and protection of human rights⁸ (LeoGrande 1981). Unfortunately, discord across the political spectrum prevented substantial structural reforms (Kowalchuk 2004; Miró 1995). Emigration and state-sponsored violence not only continued, but increased to record levels (Wood 2003). The National Guard was known to open fire on peaceful demonstrations and shot hundreds of peasants en masse as they fled rural villages during these years.

Though unrest was clearly emerging prior to the 1980s, the death of Archbishop Oscar Romero in October 1980 is considered by most the official start of the Salvadoran civil war. Romero preached the “preferential option for the poor,” opposed military and economic oppression of the Salvadoran people, and asked the U.S. government to retract military funding. One month after he pled government soldiers to stop killing innocent peasants, he was murdered in cold blood while serving mass in San Salvador. Tens-of-thousands of people attended his funeral. Military snipers opened fire and soldiers released smoke bombs, causing a stampede and the deaths of dozens of mourners. A few months later, the Catholic Church came under attack again as members of the National Guard brutally raped, mutilated, and murdered four U.S. Maryknoll nuns and a laywoman assisting war-affected civilians in San Salvador.

Around the time of these assassinations, five leftist movements consolidated into the *Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional* (FMLN). The guerilla front was composed of men and woman; adults and adolescents. It received funding, training, medical assistance, and ideological support from the Soviet Union, Nicaragua, Cuba, Costa Rica, and Mexico. Militants operated from rural, mountainous, and jungle regions, especially the Northern and Eastern districts of Morazán and Chalatenango. In 1981, they launched their first major offensive in

⁸ They aimed to disband paramilitary groups and informant networks and free political prisoners. They also sought to nationalize the coffee and banking industries and institute a minimum wage, wealth redistribution, and land reform (Menjívar 2000). They successfully passed the 1980 Agrarian Reform, which expropriated large agricultural estates and divided them among some 47,000 peasants (Kowalchuk 2004). No other substantial reforms were made.

which they attacked several military posts throughout El Salvador, assassinating mayors and suspected government informants and other traitors of their cause. They tended to engage in targeted assassinations, but like the military they also committed “acts of terrorism” in which innocent civilians were targeted and caught in the crossfire (Wood 2003).

The resources of the Salvadoran military far outweighed the FMLN largely because of U.S. support. The Reagan Administration provided the Salvadoran state extraordinary levels of financial support and training in order to prevent what Reagan called the spread of “communism in Central America” or “prevent another Nicaragua”⁹ (Reagan 1983; Riding 1980). By 1982, the U.S. was sending \$1.5 million per day to El Salvador, more than any other country it supported in the 1980s, except Israel (Menjívar 2000). The U.S. Army School of Americas also trained several top Salvadoran military officials in anti-communist counter-insurgency, including the infamous death squad leader Roberto D’Aubuisson. All of this support resulted in heightened repression against the FMLN, its sympathizers, and countless innocent civilians. The National Guard and paramilitary groups responded to opposition with unrivaled “terror tactics, such as death squad operations and attacks against civilian populations (mainly in rural areas), including massacres of entire villages believed to be sympathetic to the guerillas” (Menjívar 2000:50).

One of the most painfully remembered massacres occurred in the rural village of *El Mozote* in the district of Morazán in 1981 (Binford 1996; Danner 1993). Though the village was later discovered to be politically neutral, the Salvadoran army aimed to eliminate any and all suspected rebels in the area. Over a period of three days, the military’s Atlacatl Battalion robbed, tortured, raped, mutilated, and murdered by stabbing and hanging approximately 1,000 people—

⁹ LeoGrande (1981:27) reported that “El Salvador itself [did not] really matter.” The small Central American country was of “virtually no inherent strategic or economic interest to the United States.” It was, however, an ideal location to “[draw] the line” against “communist aggression” and to establish international political credibility.

about half of whom were children and some as young as a few days old (Binford 1996; BBC 2012; Danner 1993). El Mozote and nearby hamlets were subsequently scorched with flames. The *Washington Post* reported a month later that “dozens of composing bodies [were] still seen beneath the rubble and lying in nearby fields...countless bits of bones—skulls, rib cages, femurs, a spinal column—poked out of the rubble” (Guillermoprieto 1982).

El Mozote made international headlines, causing controversy about the United States’ role in human rights atrocities during the Cold War. Reagan downplayed the degree of repression in El Salvador, but asked the Salvadoran government to “rein in the military’s human rights abuses” (Wood 2003:28). The Salvadoran state ignored the request and instead defended and continued their tactics by providing political amnesty to members of the battalion responsible for the massacre¹⁰ (Binford 1996). The U.S. responded by shifting their support of Roberto D’Aubuisson’s bid for the Salvadoran presidency to the moderate conservative José Napoleón Duarte. In Duarte’s first year, 1984, death squad activity surged, while “aerial bombardments, strafing, mortaring and Army ground operations that kill, maim and terrorize the civilian population and that deprive them of the food they need to survive” rapidly escalated (America’s Watch 1985). He eventually became interested in “winning the hearts and minds of civilians” and thus war-related deaths declined after 1984 (Seligson and McElhinny 1996; Wood 2003:28).

In 1989, Duarte was ousted in a fraudulent election by Alfredo Cristiani, a member of the right-wing party, the *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (ARENA). When Cristiani took control, the FMLN responded with an unprecedented offensive. The *frente* infiltrated wealthy and working class neighborhoods, bringing violence to major cities for the first time. There they

¹⁰ An apology from the Salvadoran government was not issued until 2012, two decades after the signing of the Peace Accords (Allison 2012; BBC 2012). The *Inter-American Human Rights Court* only recently ordered El Salvador to formally investigate the massacre, prosecute those involved, and pay restitution to the families of the victims (BBC 2012).

assassinated several political and military officials and many economically-privileged civilians. The Cristiani Administration responded with aerial bombings, a bloody shootout in a Sheraton hotel, and the murder of six Jesuit priests and their housekeepers at the *Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeón Cañas”* (UCA). Ultimately, however, the Salvadoran government was unable to defeat rebel forces. With the threat of military aid cutoff from the U.S. looming, they entered into peace negotiations with the FMLN and other political parties in 1990. After nearly two years of deliberations, the Chapultepec Peace Accords were finalized in Mexico City on January 16, 1992 and the war came to an official end.

The Peace Accords promised transformation in El Salvador, but the consequences of over a decade of armed conflict were grave. Approximately 75,000 people lost their lives, most of whom were peasants, civilian bystanders, and guerilla sympathizers. Some 22,000 human rights violations were reported to the UN-sponsored Truth Commission. 85 percent of these violations were said to be committed by the military, 10 percent by paramilitary groups, and 5 percent by the FMLN (United Nations 1993). “Families were separated...by death, imprisonment, exile, or one of the most terrifying and omnipresent acts, the disappearance of a loved one” (Menjívar 2000:51). The economy was ravaged, contributing to the displacement of 1.5 million people—more than 30 percent of the nation’s population at the time—internally, to refugee camps in Central America, Mexico, the U.S., and other countries throughout the world (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Jones 1989; PNUD 2005; Stanley 1987). The war and its disruptions penetrated Salvadoran society so deeply that virtually all Salvadorans had been affected directly or indirectly (Coutin 2007). Distrust deeply penetrated social life in El Salvador, creating a psychosocial trauma that has yet to fully heal (Menjívar 2000, c.f. Martín-Baró 1990).

Mass Immigration to the United States

The civil war inspired large-scale migration from El Salvador to the U.S., solidifying the existence of a US-El Salvador transnational field. By 1990, a reported 465,433 foreign-born Salvadorans resided in the U.S.¹¹ (Gibson, Campbell and Lennon 1999). Wartime migrants were composed of all economic and political sectors of Salvadoran society. As García (2006:85) wrote, “Central Americans who came to the United States were a cross-section of their societies, urban and rural dwellers, factory and agricultural workers, students and professionals, young and old. They included union leaders, former political prisoners, army deserters, and church catechists. Some traveled alone; others came as part of family units. Some had been singled out for persecution in their homeland; others were trying to escape the generalized climate of violence. All were in need of safe haven.” Despite this diversity, Menjívar (2000) found that most Salvadoran immigrants to the U.S. during the war came from rural villages and tended to have less formal education than earlier entrants. Educational levels of migrants also declined as the war raged on. According to the U.S. Census, 37 percent of Salvadorans living in the U.S. in 1980 had completed no more than a primary education and by 1990 this rate had climbed to 42 percent (Gammage 2007). Likewise, 13 percent of Salvadorans living in the U.S. in 1980 had completed some postsecondary education, but that number declined to nine percent by 1990.

¹¹ The U.N. Development Programme estimated the population even higher, claiming somewhere between 565,081 and 583,396 foreign-born Salvadorans resided in the U.S. by 1990 (PNUD 2005:24).

Table 3.1
Total and Salvadoran Foreign-Born Populations
1960-2010

Year	Total Foreign-Born	Total Salvadoran-Born	Share of All Foreign-Born	Rank
1960	9,738,091	6,310	0.10%	54
1970	9,619,302	15,717	0.20%	53
1980	14,079,906	94,447	0.70%	28
1990	19,797,316	465,433	2.40%	11
2000	31,107,889	817,336	2.60%	9
2010	39,956,000	1,214,000	5.70%	6

Since the end of the war, migration has continued at heightened levels. According to a Pew Hispanic (2010) report, approximately 64 percent of the Salvadoran foreign-born population arrived to the U.S. in 1990 or later. The postwar period ushered in an ongoing transition to democracy in El Salvador, but many social problems that initially instigated the war and its associated disruptions have remained or worsened, prompting many people to continue to leave. Postwar push factors include sustained socioeconomic inequalities, unprecedented levels of street crime and gangs, and natural disasters such as earthquakes. Salvadorans also arrive to the U.S. seeking economic opportunities and hoping to reunite with family members who came before them. Though diversity continues to exist in today’s migrant stream, its demographics continue to be mostly rural, poor, and lower educated persons, especially compared to other foreign-born groups in the U.S. For instance, American Community Survey results from 2011 show that less than one-in-ten 7% Salvadorans ages 25 and older had obtained at least a bachelor’s degree. This was considerably less than the 13% of all U.S. Hispanics and 29% of the total U.S. population who had attained a bachelor’s degree (Brown and Patten 2013).

During the war and in the postwar period, most Salvadoran migrants have traveled by land and have entered the U.S. without formal authorization (Menjívar 2000). Coutin (2003) said ‘only those who owned property or were well educated could obtain visas. The majority traveled

through dangerous terrain with the help of *coyote* (smuggler) and with few personal belongings or other resources that could ensure safe passage. In the 1980s and 1990s, it was relatively easy to reside in the U.S. without documentation, at least compared to today. However, migrants still tended to travel through Guatemala and Mexico “across rough terrains rather than on roads, through sewer pipes or underground tunnels, and hidden in compartments that are usually used for cargo” (Coutin 2007:105). The cost of the journey could be thousands of dollars and the risk associated to their bodies and their spirits was great. Many persons experienced grave traumas along the migratory journey, experiencing robberies, rapes, and loss of limbs and sometimes even their lives. Migration can thus be argued to represent a second iteration of violence—after the civil war, of course—in the historical narrative of the contemporary Salvadoran emigrant.

The Context of Reception

Government Reception in the United States

The socio-legal reception of Salvadoran immigrants in the U.S. during and after the civil war can be described as hostile. According to the 1980 Refugee Act, emigrants fleeing during the civil war technically qualified as refugees. The U.S., however, preferred to grant refugee status primarily to migrants fleeing Communist states (Anker 1990). By the end of armed conflict in El Salvador in 1990, 90 percent of all refugee admissions to the U.S. came from communist or communist-dominated countries (García 2006). Because the U.S. supported the right-wing government of El Salvador, it systematically denied refugee status and political asylum to Salvadorans fleeing the country (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001). Between 1983 and 1990, it granted asylum for only 2.6 percent of the applications submitted by Salvadorans (Refugee Reports 1995). Even though many or most Salvadorans had well-founded fears of persecution,

the U.S. continued to define them as economic migrants outside the purview of humanitarian immigration aid. In an allusion to today's removal practices, rejected Salvadoran asylum seekers "arrested near the Mexico-U.S. border were herded into crowded detention centers and pressured to agree to 'voluntarily return' to their countries of origin. Thousands were deported without ever having the opportunity to receive legal advice or be informed of the possibility of applying for refugee status"¹² (Gzesh 2006).

Beginning in the early 1980s, churches, community activists, and international organizations responded to the treatment of Central American migrants in the U.S. A network of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish congregations organized a modern day Underground Railroad in the form of the Sanctuary Movement (Chinchilla, Hamilton, and Loucky 2009; Coutin 1993; Gzesh 2006). They helped "smuggle Salvadorans and Guatemalans over the border and across the country. Assistance provided to refugees included bail and legal representation, as well as food, medical care, and employment" (Gzesh 2006). Human rights organizations conducted research into the ramifications of *refoulement* (the forced return of a person to a country where he or she faces persecution), showing that deported asylum seekers were routinely imprisoned, tortured, and murdered after deportation to El Salvador (García 2006). Legal, religious, and community activists advocated alongside the U.N. Refugee Agency and eventually the Salvadoran government for and the regularization of Salvadoran immigrants. The National

¹² The U.N. Refugee Agency condemned these practices, which it considered violations of not only the 1980 Immigration Act, but also the 1951 Refugee Convention. It reported that 'the United States had failed to grant asylum to any significant number of Salvadorans and was engaged in a 'systematic practice' of deporting Salvadorans to their country regardless of the merits of their claims to asylum' (García 2006:89). It advocated for Extended Voluntary Departure (EVD) to prevent the deportations of Salvadorans to their war-torn country. 'The Reagan administration resisted the idea of EVD for Central Americans on the grounds that the violence in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala was not sufficiently intense or widespread to warrant such an action,' even though it had been offered to Cubans, Dominicans, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Hungarians, Romanians, Iranians, Lebanese, Ethiopians, Afghans, Czechs, Chileans, Ugandans, and Poles (García 2006:89-90).

Lawyers Guild and the ACLU also brought the important national-class action suit *American Baptist Churches v. Thornburgh* (ABC) “claiming that the [Reagan] administration's wholesale denial of political asylum claims and prosecutions of those who assisted refugees violated their constitutional, statutory, and internationally recognized human rights” (Gzesh 2006).

Advocates and allies eventually succeeded in negotiating a “patchwork strategy of immigration laws and policies” (Mountz, Wright, Miyares, and Bailey 2002:335-336). The *Immigration Control and Responsibility Act* (IRCA) of 1986 permitted over 16,000 Salvadorans to regularize under its amnesty for undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. (García 2006). Most Salvadorans entered the U.S. after the entry cut-off for IRCA which was set at January 1, 1982 and were thus ineligible to adjust their statuses. The *1990 Immigration Act* created *Temporary Protected Status* (TPS) and *Deferred Enforced Departure* (DED), which offered temporary relief from deportation and work authorization for many qualified Salvadorans. In 1991, a settlement was finally reached in the ABC lawsuit, which in part allowed the reopening of denied asylum cases and prohibited the government from considering foreign policy concerns in asylum claims. In 1997, the *Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act* (NACARA) provided those protected under the ABC settlement with the opportunity to become legal permanent residents and eventually naturalize as citizens if they remained eligible.

Each of these remedies transformed many otherwise undeserving Salvadoran economic migrants into deserving “protocitizens” (Coutin 2000:70). Unfortunately, they also lacked a direct pathway to citizenship and had strict requirements, complex procedures, and backlogs that disqualified and discouraged many immigrants from regularizing. The Salvadoran migrant community was left in a legally vulnerable and highly deportable state Menjívar (2006) calls “liminal legality” and Mountz and colleagues (2002) refer to as “permanent temporariness.” In

2011, only 29 percent of Salvadorans in the U.S. were citizens. 46 percent were undocumented and another 25 percent held temporary statuses or green cards (Brown and Patten 2013). The same year a remarkable 71 percent were eligible for removal if apprehended by immigration officials for a lack of documentation or if they commit a deportable offense.

Adaptation, Incorporation, and Transnational Ties

As their socio-legal history indicates, Salvadoran immigrants faced an undeniably hostile context of reception in the U.S. (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Left in mostly undocumented and liminal legal statuses, they were “denied the ‘structure of refuge,’ as Rubén G. Rumbaut (1987) termed the aid package that the U.S. government makes available to officially recognized refugees” (Menjívar 2000:89). Undocumented persons have been regulated to vulnerable “spaces of non-existence” that limited their life chances and ensure they would remain easily exploitable sources of labor (Coutin 2000; De Genova 2002). With their relatively lower levels of financial capital and education, the restructuring of the global economy in the years leading up to their arrival has regulated them to low-income jobs with limited potential for upward mobility.

Salvadoran immigrants have been regulated to lower rungs of the U.S. economy. Male migrants are concentrated in construction, consumer service, landscaping, and manufacturing industries, while women work mostly in the home, provided domestic services, and found employment in the garment industry (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Mahler 1995; Stoney and Batlova 2013). The population as a whole was more likely to live in poverty than the U.S. native-born population and many other foreign-born populations. With median annual earnings of \$20,000 for those aged 16 and older, 23% of Salvadorans lived in poverty in 2011, which was

considerably higher than the rate of 16% for the general U.S. population (Brown and Patten 2013).

In spite of marginal legal statuses, most Salvadorans in the 1980s and 1990s ‘were able to work, attend school, rent apartments, obtain drivers licenses or identification cards, and so forth.’ (Coutin 2000:15). Salvadoran and other Central American immigrants also managed to establish some vibrant ethnic communities in the U.S. Hamilton and Chinchilla (2001:59) wrote about the sights and sounds of Westlake, L.A., where the largest concentration of Salvadorans resides outside of El Salvador.

Salvadoran and Nicaraguan restaurants, Guatemalan markets, Honduran bakeries, and *pupusa* stands, [provided] home-cooked meals and familiar foods to the growing Central American population. Express courier services advertised prompt and dependable delivery of mail and packages to designed sites in Guatemala City, San José, and San Salvador. ADOC, a popular Central American show manufacturer, had opened a branch on Sixth Street. Street vendors sold mangoes, corn on the cob, *agua de coco*, or tamales wrapped in banana leaves, as well as nonfood products such as cassettes or T-shirts, on busy street corners.

Catholic and Protestant churches, labor unions, and non-profit organizations such as *El Rescate*, the *Central American Resource Center*, and the *Salvadoran American Leadership and Education Fund* emerged to service the needs of the community. Hometown associations also emerged, providing sources of mutual assistance, solidarity for ethnics, and remittance aid for those left behind in El Salvador (Paul and Gammage 2005; Orozco and Rouse 2007).

Though visible solidarity exists in Salvadoran ethnic communities, it is also true that their “social relationships do not exist in isolation from the structures in which [they] live” (Menjívar 2000:114). Structural poverty, psychosocial scars left by the war, and political cleavages within the population have impacted the degree of social support available (Menjívar 2000). Immigrants are often also so busy trying to sustain themselves that they are unable to help others ethnics. When lower levels of solidarity exist, immigrants’ access to jobs, housing, health care, and child care, and other resources are limited. Relatively lower levels of ethnic “social capital” resulting

from a relatively hostile context of reception thus inhibit Salvadorans' ability to attain modes of incorporation that could help their progeny become upwardly economically mobile in the U.S. (Menjívar 2000; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Portes and Zhou 1993).

In spite of the limitations Salvadorans encounter as they acculturate and integrate into U.S. society, the population has remained few transnational ties compared to immigrants from other countries. Abrego (2014) demonstrates that the strength and quantity of Salvadoran transnational ties at the individual level vary by gender and over the lifecourse as immigrants adapt to U.S. society in varying ways and to varying degrees. Salvadorans also demonstrate different attitudes toward return¹³ (Moran-Taylor and Menjívar 2005). Still, when compared to other immigrant and ethnic groups in the U.S., the population has relatively low levels of transnational engagement. A study by Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003) found, for example, that only between 10 to 15 percent of Salvadoran and Dominican entrepreneurial immigrants retain transnational ties to their countries-of-origin.

Relative to other groups Salvadorans are a population physically and psychosocially “confined within” the U.S. (Coutin 2010). Partial or a lack of legal documentation in the U.S. prevents most Salvadorans from voluntarily leaving without losing certain rights associated with their physical presence in the U.S., especially the ability to re-enter with authorization (Coutin

¹³ Moran-Taylor and Menjívar (2005) demonstrate that diversity exists in Salvadorans' desires and motivations regarding return to El Salvador. They found that Salvadorans and Guatemalans express at least three different attitudes. Individuals with *assertive* intentions of returning tend to have maintained ties to their homeland and families and report high levels of prejudice, discrimination, and marginalization in the receiving country. Other migrants report *ambivalence* about return. These individuals may long for the place they left behind, but have migratory goals yet to attain. They may have financial incentives to stay abroad or have children in the U.S. whom they hope will complete an education and become financially independent prior to return. They may also be awaiting a change in their legal status so that they can easily move back and forth. A third group reported *no desire* to return. This occurred when migrants formed families in their receiving country. It also included “successful entrepreneurship, economic instability in their home country, and apprehensiveness due to their country of origin's political climate” (Moran-Taylor and Menjívar 2005:108).

2010a). Many Salvadorans also repressed memories and knowledge associated with the civil war when they left El Salvador (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001). They can be paralyzed by the thought of returning to a postwar society still struggling with many of the fundamental social and economic ills that led to civil unrest in the 1980s, including political corruption, vast income inequality, and the lack of a reliable social welfare system (Moran-Taylor and Menjívar 2005). Many also often fear more contemporary social problems like street gangs that are helping transform the Northern Triangle into the murder capital of the world (OSAC 2011).

Gang Emergence and Growth

In some urban spaces when Salvadorans are concentrated ethnic and racial tensions interacted with a negative context of reception and psychosocial traumas of war to foster the formation of street gangs. Many Salvadorans migrated directly to South Central Los Angeles, an area formerly occupied by Blacks that was becoming dominated by Latinos, and especially Mexicans. Latinos often viewed African Americans negatively, associating them with drugs and crime, while African Americans often “saw the newcomers as taking over their neighborhoods and sometimes their jobs” (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001:58). It is within this context that some Salvadoran youth found themselves in vulnerable states of “multiple marginality” that made them at-risk for gang entry (Vigil 2002). Somewhere between two and ten percent of Salvadoran immigrant youth were lured into the streets of L.A. (Vigil 2002). There that they learned new norms, values, and attitudes in exchange for protection, friendship, and emotional support (Vigil 2002). Gangs like *18th Street* expanded to include Salvadoran newcomers. Other youth counter-cultures evolved into distinct cliques that eventually came to share a common gang identity, like *Mara Salvatrucha 13* (MS).

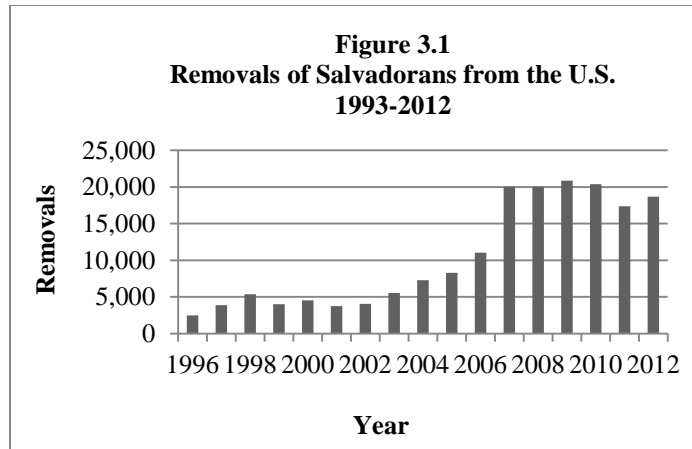
In the early years after their formation MS-13 and 18th Street were considered ‘first generation gangs’ mostly involved in drug sales, trafficking, and turf-based warfare (Sullivan 1997). The two rival gangs engaged in activities that ‘included ambushes and drive-by shootings in which bystanders more often than gang participants were injured or killed’ (Vigil 2002, 143). The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and other police departments throughout the country responded to these problems mostly with repressive force. They implemented court injunctions that prohibited suspected gang members from loitering in designated areas and permitted police raiding of suspected gang hangouts and gangsters’ homes. The LAPD-Rampart Division’s anti-gang unit *Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums* (CRASH) which operated in the predominantly Salvadoran areas of Los Angeles was known to be particularly corrupt. In 1999, it came under fire for the Rampart Scandal which uncovered the unit’s engagement in “unprovoked shootings and beatings, planting evidence, framing subjects, stealing and dealing narcotics, bank robberies, perjury, and covering up evidence of these activities” (Zilberg 2011, 42). Their primary targets had been gangs in general, but they were particularly interested in criminalizing and, when possible, deporting Latino and Latin American immigrant adolescents and young adults believed to be associated with urban decay (Zilberg 2011).

In more recent years some observers contend that certain Latino gangs, especially MS-13, have become more hierarchically-orientated and business-minded “second generation” gangs (Sullivan 1997). They may even be evolving into “third generation” gangs that “have evolved political aims. These are the most complex gangs and they operate—or aspire to operate—at the global end of the spectrum, using their sophistication to garner power, aid financial acquisition and engage in mercenary-type activities” (Sullivan 2008). For instance, in 2012, the U.S. federal

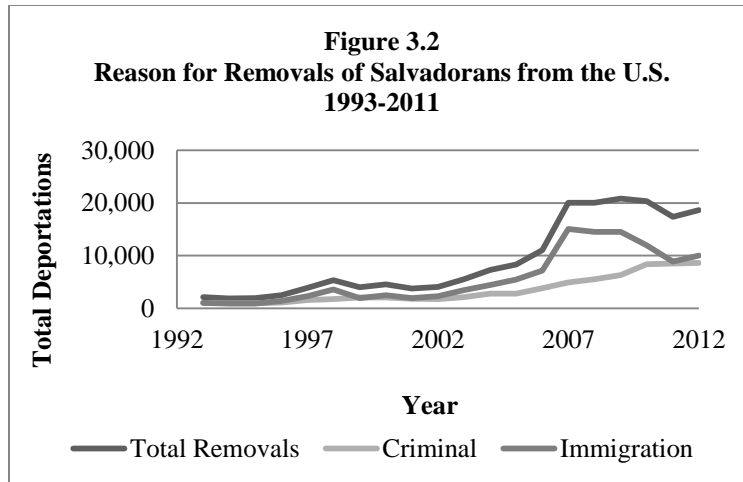
government declared MS-13 a “transnational criminal organization” (Quinones, Blankstein, and Ryan 2012), which allows them to seize the assets of gang members found in the U.S. Such a designation may reflect MS-13’s more sophisticated organizational structure and criminal activities, but it most certainly demonstrates the U.S. state’s attitude and practices toward gangs.

Since the mid-1990s, MS-13 and other gangs have become the subject of a media spectacle and moral panic in the U.S. Films like National Geographic’s *World’s Most Dangerous Gang* sensationalize the gang phenomenon, contributing to the perception that Salvadoran migrants are delinquents who intend to wreak havoc in the U.S. They also help legitimate criminal an immigration enforcement agencies’ specific targeting of Latino communities. Created in 2005, ICE’s *Operation Community Shield* partners with U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies to identify members of street gangs and target them for removal from the country. Since the program’s inception, ICE has “arrested more than 31,200 gang members and associates, representing more than 2,400 different gangs and cliques” since the implementation of the program (ICE 2014). However, “since there is no legal definition of criminal street gang membership, officers have tremendous discretion in deciding whom to classify as a gang associate” (Bernstein 2007; Chacón 2007). Undocumented immigrant laborers and non-citizens convicted of minor crimes are often caught up in gang raids (Bernstein 2007). The effect appears to be the increased deportability, and marginalization, of the wider Salvadoran community.

Deportation of Salvadorans



Deportation represents the most recent iteration of transnational ties between the U.S. and El Salvador. Since 2007, between 20,000 and 17,000 migrants are formally removed from the U.S. to El Salvador each year (USDHS 2013). As Figure 3.1 shows, total numbers of removals of Salvadorans have on the rise since 1996. They more rapidly grew after the formation of the *Department of Homeland Security* in 2003, the implementation of *Operation Community Shield* in 2005, and the rapid increase of state and local partnerships in immigration enforcement in the mid to late 2000s. As a result of these programs and the sheer size of the Salvadoran undocumented and liminal populations, Salvadorans are now one of the most highly deported populations from the U.S. In 2012, there were 18,677 Salvadorans removed from the U.S. (USDHS 2013). This made them the fourth most-highly removed foreign-born population in the U.S. by total number of removals. More Mexicans (293,966), Guatemalans (30,313), and Hondurans (21,963) were deported than Salvadorans, but given the small size of El Salvador the societal impact is potentially greater than in any other country in Latin America (USDHS 2013).



As Figure 3.2 highlights, until 2011, the majority of the total Salvadoran removals over the last two decades have been for immigration violations rather than criminal convictions (USDHS 2002 and 2013). Since 1993, 63 percent of individuals were removed for immigration violations. Though more specific data on the types of crimes committed by deported Salvadorans has not been made publically available, it is also likely the case that most of the other 37 percent removed for crimes were charged with relatively minor, non-violent offenses redefined as aggravated felonies under reforms to immigration and removal laws in 1996 (HRW 2009). The U.S. does not publish the rates of gang-related removals, but all available evidence indicates that they represent a small proportion of total removals to El Salvador.

The Context of Return

The context to which contemporary deportees return in El Salvador is best characterized as a postwar society that is undergoing an impressive political transition to a more inclusive democratic state. However it is also a society that is continues to struggle with many of the social problems that first brought on civilian unrest and mass migration to the U.S. When Salvadoran

deportees “go home” they encounter a weak institutional framework for deportee re/insertion, a neoliberalized economy highly reliant of migrant remittances and foreign investment, high rates of poverty, inequality, unemployment, and street crime, and a state that historically conflates deportee and gang identities, and a historically repressive anti-gang policing strategy.

The Political-Economic Context of Return

The 1992 Peace Accords brought several advancements in Salvadoran society; most importantly the democratization of the political arena. The settlement initiated a cease-fire between government and guerilla forces that continues to the present day. The FMLN was demobilized and became a legitimate political party that gradually became more influential in politics over the last decade. Elections have been held at all levels of government with lower levels of reported fraud than before the war. The constitutional role of the army was redefined, “in terms of defending the country from external threats and assisting in natural disasters” rather than “meddling in political life” of the country (Castaneda 2003:1). Police and other security forces were reorganized and mandated to include a certain number of FMLN supporters. The freedom of the press and speech were also expanded, which has legitimized liberal rhetoric to a greater degree than during and before the war.

There were also repopulation programs, socioeconomic experiments in certain Salvadoran communities, and land reform. From 1992-1997 there was a massive land transfer program called the *Programa de Transferencia de Tierras* (Land Transfer Program, PTT). “The PTT provided land to demobilized government soldiers and members of the FMLN, as well as a smaller category of noncombatant supporters of the insurgents who had resided in conflict zones during the civil war—40,000 families in all. But the capacity for this program to reduce rural

poverty is hampered by beneficiaries' inadequate access to credit and minimal knowledge of farming techniques as well as the high prices for and marginal quality of the land rendered through the program. Given these problems, Salvadoran economist Pedro Juan Hernandez referred to the PTT in 1995 as a program of "reinsertion into poverty." Writing at the time the PTT was nearly complete, Paige observed that "Agrarian tension in El Salvador have not diminished at all, despite declining birthrates, rural migration to cities, and land reform. Indeed, recent research reveals a trend toward the re-concentration of land ownership in the 1990s." (Kowalchuk 2004:189).

Though the post-war period promised to bring economic development to El Salvador, the state has largely pursued externalist, neoliberal economic policies. They privatized state enterprises, liberalized trade, dollarized the economy, and invited foreign-investment. They also encouraged emigration to attract migrant remittances. Migrant remittances, which composed 17% of the nation's GDP in 2012, represent the largest foreign source of income for the Salvadoran economy (World Bank 2013). Neoliberal policies mildly increased the GDP and helped create jobs in certain sectors. They also increased reliance on the U.S. economy, dramatically weakened the rural sector, inflated food prices, perpetuated socioeconomic inequalities and unemployment, and contributed to the growth of the informal and illicit labor markets. Neoliberalism has significantly limited economic opportunities for deported persons, especially those returning to rural areas. However, it has also opened up new sectors in the economy, such as the maquiladora industry and telecommunications industry. Though both industries rely on the vulnerability of the Salvadoran labor force and help reinforce their precarity, foreign-owned "call centers" have become important sites for many deportees who may not have otherwise encountered employment in El Salvador.

Violence and Insecurity

Deportation from the U.S. fueled early gang growth, expansion, and rising rates of crime and violence in El Salvador (Arana 2005; Blake n.d.; Boraz and Bruneau 2006; Grascia 2004; Lopez, Cornell, and Kraul 2005; Reisman 2006). However, “it would be a mistake to ascribe the expansion of gang membership and the emergence of the ‘gang problem’ in the 1990s to the constant influx of deportees and returnees in the postwar years” (Cruz 2009:4). Homegrown turf-based gangs existed in El Salvador since the 1960s, decades before large-scale Salvadoran emigration and deportation. They expanded and exploded during and after the civil war in the 1980s and 1990s. There was an abundance of poor, disenfranchised, and traumatized youth who attended weak schools, confronted ubiquitous violence in their families and neighborhoods, and had ready access to war weapons. Facing few prospects for social mobility, they organized into neighborhood cliques and engaged in low-level turf fights and drug use (Cruz 2009).

When U.S. transnationals returned to El Salvador in the 1990s, they knew little of the country, had few social ties available to provide housing and other social support, and faced a postwar society lacking economic opportunities. The *Sombra Negra* (Black Shadow)—a vigilante group composed mostly of police officers and military personal who participated in wartime of the death squads—was also increasingly hunting down, torturing, raping, and murdering suspected gang members sometimes immediately upon arrival at the airport. An unknown number of deportees with gang histories took to the streets where they encountered local ‘*mareros*’ (gangsters) who admired their style and mannerisms (Zilberg 2010). Their experience with “authentic” gang culture in the U.S. often afforded them elevated stature in local cliques, allowing them to influence the direction gangs would take in El Salvador.

Though they only comprised about ten percent of the gang population of El Salvador in the mid-1990s (Cruz and Portillo Pena 1998), deportees' influence was transformative. They encouraged local gang members to convert their identities to *Salvatruchos* (MS-13) and *Dieciochos* (18th Street). They also diffused “the use of tattoos, the utilization of gang signs to communicate and, more importantly for the increase of violence and criminal behavior, they included the norms, values, and knowledge about how to behave, about who is the enemy, and about who is friend” (Cruz 2009:4). Under their influence, gangs moved from participation in relatively low-level crimes like shoplifting, brawling, and marijuana usage to more visible and threatening extortions, robberies, assaults, cocaine and methamphetamine use and sales, and rapes and murders (Cruz and Portillo Pena 1998). These behaviors undeniably contributed to making El Salvador the most violent country in the Western Hemisphere, with annual rates of homicide six times higher than the world average.

While deportees undeniably influenced gang culture, it was the state's repressive response that hardened oppositional identities and institutionalized violent practices (Cruz 2009). Police, security agents, and vigilante groups continued their social cleansing campaign against suspected gang members throughout the 1990s and 2000s. People disappeared from their homes, communities, and shortly after their arrival at the airport. Law enforcement frequently murdered urban youth—sometimes en masse—and blamed it on gangs. The repressive *mano dura* (heavy hand) and *super mano dura* (super heavy hand) programs criminalized gang membership, resulting in the incarceration of thousands of suspected gang members. Inside prisons similarly named but previously unrelated and loosely affiliated cliques organized hierarchically and consolidated control over their constituents. Although there is contention on this point (see Wolf

2012), mass incarceration may have also helped them evolve from prison gangs into cartel-like organizations that are increasingly involved in transnational trafficking (Cruz 2008 and 2010).

The contemporary period is marked by high levels of violence and insecurity, largely because of the rapid growth of gangs in the country. For many years El Salvador was the most violent country in the world, as measured by annual numbers of homicides. In recent years homicide rates have fluctuated greatly after the government negotiated an historic gang truce between MS-13 and 18th Street in 2012, but rates of violence and crimes against property (especially extortion) remain high. They are, in fact, a key driving force behind the large influx of Central American minors to the U.S. in recent years (see Kennedy 2014). Life in El Salvador remains incredibly insecure and “crime stories” have become commonplace in the discourse of locals (Moodie 2010). This dissertation argues that many Salvadoran deportees from the U.S., especially those who grew up abroad and have gang histories or carry markers of gang histories (like tattoos) on their bodies, are at an increased risk for targeting from gangs and police and security forces battling the gang crisis.

The Institutional Context of Return

The institutional context of return has done little to mitigate the potential negative social and economic context of return deportees face in El Salvador. When they land at the Cuscatlán International Airport outside San Salvador, deported migrants are greeted by a program called *Bienvenidos a Casa*, or Welcome Home. This program provides an introduction to the country, a small snack, and money for phone calls and transportation to their final destination. It once assisted deportees in applying for identification, provided job training and placement, and offered referrals for health services, but its scope is now more limited. The current program’s main function is to document incoming deportees, especially those with criminal records or

tattoos, ostensibly for future surveillance. With a lack of civil society organizations catering to the specific needs of deportees and gang members, the onus for locating housing, employment, and other necessary services has been placed almost entirely on deportees and their families. The rest of the dissertation will track the ways in which these deportees experience and respond to such a hostile context of return.

CHAPTER 4

Methods and Reflections

This dissertation seeks to uncover how Salvadoran deportees experience and respond to return, as well as the factors that give rise to divergent post-deportation trajectories. The ideal way to study such questions would be through a longitudinal analysis of a large-scale, randomized or representative sample of deported persons. Unfortunately, such data does not exist. Deportees are often closely monitored by the states from which they are expelled and to which they are removed, but governments have not made publically available any data they collect. The question of “ex-corporation” via voluntary and forced return has also only recently become of scholarly interest. Because deportees tend to be socially, economically, and legally vulnerable populations that are dispersed throughout their countries-of-citizenship, they can be difficult to systematically identify, survey, and track without substantial time and resources.

I triangulated three different types of qualitative data. The primary data come from 100 surveys and life history interviews conducted with individuals who experienced at least one deportation from the US to El Salvador. I supplemented deportee interviews with expert interviews and participant observation. I conducted 20 informal, open-ended interviews with experts who had experience working with Salvadoran migrants, deportees, and gang members. These were held in San Salvador and Los Angeles and included government officials, staff at non-profit organizations, and activists. Between 2008 and 2011, I also completed observations nonprofit organizations, in Salvadoran homes, buses and other public spaces in Los Angeles and El Salvador. I also attended and recorded the *Semana del Migrante* conference in San Salvador

in 2011 and a conference on the draft *Convention on the Rights of Forcibly Expelled Persons* in Boston in 2014. Both conferences informed my thinking on this project.

Data Collection

Data collection took place in four phases between 2008 and 2013. In the first phase, I traveled to El Salvador in 2008. I lived with a host family, took Spanish classes, participated in cultural immersion activities, and observed operations at a gang-prevention organization in San Salvador. I took notes and helped transcribe and analyze data from three focus group interviews conducted by Susan Bibler Coutin. I also conducted 29 exploratory interviews with deportees living in greater San Salvador. I obtained these study participants through a referral, snowball sampling design. Referrals were obtained from several organizations, including: *El Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad* (Center for Exchange and Solidarity, a transnational solidarity organization), *El Centro de Recursos Centroamericanos* (Central American Resource Center, a migrant advocacy organization), *Alcance Victoria* (Victory Outreach, a Pentecostal alcohol and drug rehabilitation program), and a public defender who worked in rural communities outside San Salvador. During this first phase of the project, interviews and observations continued for eight weeks. 43 total interviews were conducted, including those with Susan's fourteen focus group participants.

Phase two took place during the summer of 2011. I aimed to investigate the relationship between deported persons' migratory cohort status and their post-removal trajectories (see Dingeman and Rumbaut 2010; Dingeman-Cerda and Rumbaut forthcoming). I implemented a 'mixed purposeful' sampling design that combined stratified purposeful and referral sampling strategies (Patton 1990). I sought maximum variation in deportee homecoming and homemaking

narratives, but specifically requested participants who were child or adult migrants to the U.S. I also requested female participants, gang members, and individuals who worked in call centers. *El Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad* and *Alcance Victoria* provided initial referrals. I also obtained referrals from Virginia Quintana Salazar and a voluntary return migrant who once worked in a call center in San Salvador. This phase of the project lasted approximately six weeks. I interviewed a total of 50 deportees. I also spoke with several experts on migration, deportation, and gangs. I met most of these people through the *Semana del Migrante* (Week of the Migrant) conference sponsored by the *Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador*.

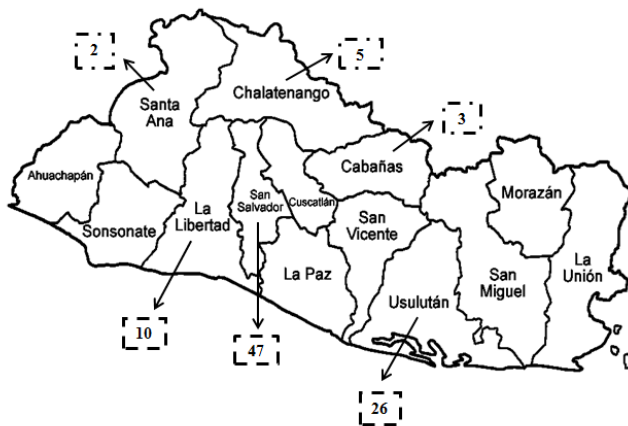
The third phase three took place in the U.S. over the 2011-2012 academic year. I volunteered and observed in two nonprofit organizations in area of Los Angeles, Pico Union, with a high concentration of Salvadorans (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001). At *Homies Unidos*, a gang prevention organization, I assisted with administrative tasks and spoke with activists proactively working to curb gang violence. At the *Central American Resource Center*, a migrant rights organization, I worked on a project advocating for U visas for immigrant victims of violent crime. I was familiarized with ways attorneys strategize to alleviate the statuses of irregular migrants and prevent their removal. While at these organizations, I hoped to interview deported persons who returned to the U.S., as well as family members of deported persons. As I address below, I struggled to gain access to these populations. I was, however, able to interview 3 Salvadoran deportees who were living clandestinely in the U.S. post-removal.

The final phase of the project occurred over 2012-2013. I needed more information on people living in rural areas of El Salvador post-removal. I also needed more information on how deportees come to find employment in foreign-owned call centers post-removal. 8 interviews with deported persons living in rural areas were conducted by Cristy Ayala, a Salvadoran-born

and fully bilingual research assistant formerly employed by *El Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad*. Cristy had been involved with the project since its conception, providing translation and transcription assistance as necessary. She was trained with the interview schedule and was able to facilitate the interviews in my absence. I conducted a final 2 interviews via Skype with two deportees who worked in call centers, arranged by a gatekeeper who previously assisted with participant referrals. Upon completion of these 10 interviews in 2013, I attained theoretical saturation. Individuals' life stories began to sound similar and patterns in their outcomes were discernible. The final sample size was 100.

Figure 4.1

Location of Interviews with Salvadoran Deportees



As the map above shows, 96 of these interviews were conducted in El Salvador and four were conducted in the U.S. 47 interview of these were obtained in or around the capital city of San Salvador. The rest took place in relatively less urbanized parts of the country. Ten interviews were conducted in La Libertad, a district known for tourism and surfing located to the west and south of San Salvador. Twenty-six interviews took place in the agricultural district of Usulután southeast of San Salvador. Fourteen of these took place in a model outside the capital of the

district, twelve were on a coconut plantation organized into a collective cooperative on the southern coast, and two took place in a small village in the north. Ten more interviews were conducted in small villages, or *cantóns*, in the rural districts of Chalatenango, Cabañas, and Santa Ana. Each of these districts has a distinct history, but Chalatenango and Cabañas are particularly memorable because they were sites of guerilla occupation that were harshly impacted by the civil war. All three villages sustain significant migratory connections to the U.S. The final four interviews were conducted in the Pico-Union district of Los Angeles, where the largest concentration of Salvadoran nationals can be found outside of El Salvador [Gammage 2007; Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001].

Negotiating Participation

Given the difficulties locating and gaining the trust of unauthorized populations in the US, one might expect similar challenges with deportees. They are a vulnerable population that experiences much surveillance, violence, stigmatization and criminalization. It is in their interest to remain “in the shadows” much like undocumented immigrants in the US who often avoid contact with police, government agencies, and researchers. Despite the potential risks to their comfort and privacy, it was relatively easy to obtain participants in El Salvador. I do not have a valid count on the number of participant refusals because the interviews were arranged for me. Gatekeepers informed me on several occasions that people initially interested in being interviewed changed their minds. But the gatekeepers were always able to find new participants. Some deported persons went as far as to seek me out to be interviewed.

Several factors were responsible for motivating deportees’ participation. The financial incentive promised to them was arguably the primary motivator. The 20 dollars provided for their testimony was equivalent to one or two days of work for most participants. As one

interviewee put it “yeah man, if there’s cash involved, I’m in.” Another factor that seemed to encourage participation was the discussion of IRB protections at the outset of each interview. Potential participants were informed that participation was voluntary, they could choose to decline questions without penalty, and they could terminate the interview without the loss of the financial incentive. I informed them that their real names or other identifying information, such as their address or specific place of employment, would not be collected. They were asked to choose their own pseudonyms so they could identify themselves in any publications. I told them that that I did not work for any government agency. Because I did not take their identifying information, I could not provide it to any agency that audited me. This explanation of IRB rights seemed to quell fears of initiating participation.

To make the participants comfortable, I maintained a friendly and empathetic attitude. Some participants remained reluctant to share their stories. A few asked for reassurance that their real names would not be used. Others delayed or interrupted the interview to ask questions like “What are you going to write?” In such instances, I employed a few tactics. I stopped the interview to re-explain the dissertation. I assured them I was interested in understanding how U.S. immigration and deportation laws affect people’s lives. I said my role was not to judge, but to understand what happened to them and how they interpreted their experiences. I reiterated that if any question made them uncomfortable, they could skip to the next question or provide a brief answer. I also tried to re-establish rapport by sharing a little about myself, my observations about El Salvador, and my hopes for the dissertation. I spoke about my experience as a social worker seeing youth I cared about deported and wondering what happened to them. I also told them that I hoped this dissertation would give deported persons a ‘voice’ and that their participation would help people in the U.S. understand and improve upon immigration laws.

These tactics were typically successful. I obtained incredibly rich, detailed interviews. The average interview lasted 1.5 hours. Interview transcripts were typically 30 to 40 single-spaced pages, but went as high as 85 pages. There was wide variation in the amount of detail provided, however. Those with lesser education who only spoke Spanish typically shared less than those with more education and English abilities. Their interviews were typically 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. English speakers typically spent longer in the U.S. and therefore had more to share about their migratory experience abroad and the impact of removal on their personal lives and those of their families. Their interviews were often 2 hours long. Such variation can be understood as a remnant of not only their educational history and linguistic abilities, but also the social and cultural distance between the interviewee and interviewer.

Identifying participants in the US was considerably more difficult than El Salvador. As was previously mentioned I worked through nonprofit organizations in L.A. to gain access to deported persons who returned to the U.S. and the family members of deportees in El Salvador. The US-based organizations were unable to assist to the same degree as gatekeepers in El Salvador. Staff members were justifiably concerned about the confidentiality and anonymity of their clients and were thus unable to provide me contact information of potential participants. My gatekeepers in El Salvador had flexibility in their schedules to assist with locating interviewees. Those in L.A. could not dedicate large amounts of time to helping locate participants. I attempted to locate participants through my personal networks, but struggled with cancellations and no-shows. With only 3 interviews conducted in the U.S., I decided to focus the dissertation largely on the process of re/integration in El Salvador.

The lives of deported persons in El Salvador are often more socially and economically precarious than undocumented persons and mixed-status family members of deportees in the US.

It seems ironic they were more willing to “come out of the shadows” to share their stories. However, differential recruitment outcomes in the US and El Salvador can be at least partially explained by the cost-benefit analysis in which potential research participants engage prior to involvement. A 20 dollar financial incentive can be stretched much further in El Salvador than it can in the U.S. People in the US do not stand as much to gain by sharing their stories, at least financially. They may also be fearful of losing privileges accorded to them by their territorial presence in the US if they share information to an unknown person. In El Salvador, deportees can lose their lives or their limbs because of their status, but they are also a virtually silenced population that has yet to collectively mobilize. Sharing their stories was, I believe, a way to have their voices heard. As one man expressed “I never shared these things about my life with anyone except my wife before. It feels good to let it out.”

Study Administration

After participants were recruited, I met them in a negotiated location that ensured maximum comfort and safety of the interviewee and the research team. In San Salvador, we usually met in restaurants or hotels in neutral gang territory. In rural areas participants were typically interviewed privately in their homes or friends’ homes. There were occasions, however, when gatekeepers arranged to have individuals interviewed in restaurants, hotels, or nonprofit organizations. During the focus group interviews conducted by Susan Coutin, for instance, space in a rural hacienda was rented for our use. In 2011, a nonprofit organization in another rural area provided private space in their office for interviews to be conducted. Reflecting upon data collection, I do not believe the location of the interview influenced the *quantity* of stories provided. Being interviewed in a public space like a restaurant may have, however, influenced

how deported persons performed their identities, the types of stories they offered, and the ways they narrated their interpretations of their experiences.

Whenever the preferred language of the deportee or expert informant was Spanish, I utilized the services of the interpreter, as I am conversational, but not fluent, in Spanish. I employed Cristy Ayala, an IRB-approved native Salvadoran Spanish speaker with professional-level fluency in English. In 2008, when my Spanish abilities were more limited, Cristy translated my questions and participants' responses nearly verbatim. By 2011, it was not necessary to have everything translated. She translated my questions verbatim and periodically interpreted interviewee's responses when I signaled to her that something was not clear. We found the format in 2011 yielded richer data than in 2008. Cristy and I had established stronger rapport and there were fewer interruptions in the natural flow of the interviews. By 2011, Cristy's presence became an asset. She was familiar with the local history of many rural communities we visited. She also knew many of the members of these communities. She helped establish rapport during the interview, provided information to contextualize participants' responses, and inserted occasional questions to inspire new—and usually fruitful—lines of inquiry.

Interviews with deportees included a structured survey and a semi-structured life history interview (see appendix). The survey sought demographic and descriptive data to create a profile of the interviewees. It included questions related to their migratory, legal, familial, employment, and educational backgrounds. The semi-structured interview was designed to extract deported persons' narratives of migration, acculturation, deportation, re/integration, and other significant life events. I wanted to know not only *what happened*, but *how participants narrated* their histories. I asked questions about their childhood, migration, incorporation in the US, removal, post-deportation adaptation, and plans for the future. They were invited to reflect on how their

socioeconomic reality, significant relationships, and identities transformed at each relevant turning point.

It is important to remain open and flexible in ethnographic interviews to encourage interviewees to share as much information as possible (Spradley 1979). However, researchers have also found that when study participants are subjected to drastically different “stimuli” in the form of differently worded or ordered questions, it was occasionally difficult to compare results across individual cases (Fowler 1995). I negotiated these competing objectives by utilizing a semi-structured, chronological approach. I had a set of questions I wanted addressed, but I worded questions as they organically arose to allow participants to feel like they were engaging in a conversation. I included prompts to help improve memory recall and solicit more details. I returned to points made earlier in the interview and asked interviewees to elaborate on how one event was related to another to ensure logical consistency. When individuals contradicted themselves or left out relevant details of their stories, I used intuition about whether to probe further. I was cognizant that by probing too much, I risked violating the boundaries of some participants, making them feel as though they were being judged or interrogated, which would ultimately risk the quality of the interview. I found most people to be friendly and open and was typically able to probe for more information.

There were cases and moments in which the personality of the participant, type of question asked, and my own sense of safety led me to abandon the semi-structured format for a more free-flowing, open-ended format. In one extreme outlier case, I interviewed a man called Victor who had recently been released after serving 5 years in maximum-security prison. His interview with me was the first time he left his home since being released. We met in a public hotel with his gatekeeper and several readily available private security officers. Victor was

convinced that there were snipers on top of the hotel preparing to shoot him during the interview. He also asked me why I was doing research that could lead to my death. Concerned about my own safety if I probed too much, I let him guide the interview to the areas he felt most relevant. This was a case in which the formal “stimuli” was necessarily different. But Victor shared details about the history of 18th Street and other gangs in El Salvador that otherwise would not have been elucidated. The interview became one of the most illuminating of the entire sample.

The Negotiation of Difference

I am an outsider to the Salvadoran migrant and deportee experience. Travels to Central America and other developing countries around the world, employment as a social worker for refugees and undocumented Central Americans, personal relationships with Latin American migrants, and scholarly exploration of the experience of migration provide me intellectual understanding and empathetic insights into the migrant experience. However, I have never been forced, coerced or voluntarily chosen to settle abroad. I do not know the lived experience of being an ethnic and racialized minority in the US. I have never lived in a situation of near absolute economic deprivation, nor I have I lived near or otherwise been involved with individuals with gang histories. For these reasons, and surely others, I am limited in my ability truly understand the people I interviewed. My phenotype and multiple privileged identities also limited my ability to obtain ‘insider’ knowledge unique to Salvadoran migrants and deportees.

“All the world’s a stage,” wrote Shakespeare. As Goffman (1959) re-articulated, actors present themselves in accordance with their, and what they presume to be society’s, vision of them. Self-presentations alter across time and space, varying by context and types of interactions. As Simmel (1950) argued, people embedded in different social networks sometimes share with

each other *more* intimate details of their lives than they do with those occupying less social distance. Deported persons may have been more willing to share their stories with me precisely *because* of my outsider status. It remains the case, however, that subtle power dynamics permeate ethnographic interviews (Fowler 2009). Differently framed narratives emerge depending on the national, racial, class, gender, sexual, and other identities of researchers and participants (Saperstein and Penner 2014). Interviewees highlight aspects of their personalities and details of their lives they believe will appease investigators. If they feel threatened or embrace oppositional identities, they may present themselves less favorably. In what follows, I describe my experience of negotiating difference in the research process.

Nationality and Language

Any interviews conducted by me with a bilingual person were held in English. Those held in Spanish were facilitated with the assistance of an interpreter. The ability to communicate in a common language without a third party resulted in better rapport between me and my interviewees. I attained more intimate, detailed narratives from individuals who speak English than those who spoke Spanish, especially during the first phase of the research in 2008. The relative reserve of Spanish-only speakers could have been caused by the presence of an interpreter whose necessary interventions prevented the natural emergence of conversational-style interviews. It was also clear that I shared more cultural capital with deportees who spoke English fluently. Some U.S nationals even remarked that they had more in common with me than the average Salvadoran. In interviews with this population I was able to draw upon our shared cultural capital to build a positive repertoire. We chatted about sports, the weather, food, and tourist attractions in Southern California. Without a third party present, I was also more

comfortable sharing information about my life, such as where I grew up, went to school, and my favorite hobbies. Such chatter helped close the distance between U.S. nationals and I. The interpreter, Cristy, became a cultural broker during Spanish interviews, helping to extract detailed testimonies from Salvadoran transnationals. We attained rich, useful data, but it was noticeably more challenging to bridge the multiple divides that existed between the interviewees and me.

Gender

Gender was another division that may have impacted deportee narratives. Though I only spoke with 4 women, the experience of interviewing them was unique. Privacy seemed to be more important. I knew of a couple women who had been deported in a village, neither were willing to meet me, ostensibly out of fear of revealing their status. I spoke with a woman in her house who was nervous about being interviewed while her relatives were home. Once we located a private room for the interview, she opened up about the contentious relationship with her mother and the painful story of the miscarriage of her daughter while she was in detention and seven months pregnant. In a final case, a woman's husband, who was also deported and interviewed the day before, was present during her interview. She was shy, responding with only "yes" or "no" answers. After her interview, she pulled me away from her husband. Her tone changed. She opened up with emotion about the abuse she endured from her husband after he used his financial incentive to purchase alcohol. She asked that I purchase her a diaper bag for her baby rather than provide a cash incentive. On the one hand, this revelation raises serious ethical concerns about the use of financial stipends in social research. It also highlights the

importance of privacy in obtaining emotionally intimate interview responses, at least among women.

The experience of interviewing men was different. Many men were willing to share painful details about their life events. They shared dehumanizing experiences they encountered during pre-removal incarceration and detention, how it felt to be forcibly separated from their partners, parents, and children, in the US, the de-masculinization they faced receiving remittances from family for whom they once provided, and how they managed to navigating life in El Salvador with tarnished identities, weak social ties, and a lack of economic resources. They also shared their fear and anger surrounding interactions with police and gang members, as well as the passionate longings to return to the U.S. I believe I was able to elicit such emotional responses to my questions precisely *because* of our gender differential. They felt safe sharing their feelings with a woman. A male interviewer may not have elicited the same degree of intimacy.

Criminal Histories

On the whole, interviewees tended to be open about their lives. However, some avoided talking about their criminal history. The case of Gabriel is illustrative. Gabriel was heavily involved in the 18th Street gang in the US and was a founding member of a gang prevention organization in San Salvador. He explained that Salvadoran gang members “don’t really trust people that are outsiders ... there are some other people that come, you know, trying to make money out of *Homies* and that’s what they don’t like.” Gabriel provided an incredibly rich testimony, but he dodged questions related to his gang involvement. At one point I observed an inconsistency in his testimony. He claimed to be an “inactive” gang member, but he said he was

involved in a gang truce that took place in the 1990s. I asked him how gang members could be both inactive and influential in negotiating a truce. He did not provide a coherent answer. He changed the subject to the Salvadoran government's treatment of disenfranchised youth.

Katie: So all the people [involved in negotiating the truce] were inactive at that point?

Gabriel: Inactive, yes.

Katie: Okay. But you were saying they had influence over the active people?

Gabriel: Yeah we used to have an influence over the active people. Yeah we used to have an influence. And, umm, that means, like, umm, I mean it's a good question. I mean, why, they didn't do anything [to improve the situation for youth]. I believe, you know, if ARENA had done something back then for the youngsters, give them the chance to...I don't know.

Gabriel's avoidance of his criminal history was a tactic he employed to protect himself. Boasting about past gang activity can be problematic for inactive gang members. He explained that some inactive members "still like to talk about big things, saying like, 'I used to do this.' And you could feel that they haven't changed that much...You cannot be playing two faces...[They] must have a good testimony. If not, they kill you." Gabriel's avoidance of my questions about gang activity was thus his way of disengaging from a potentially dangerous game of 'doble cara' that could lead to harm. He instead provided a remarkably consistent and believable testimony of reformation, Christian salvation, and anti-gang activism. It was not until after I spent some time in the field with Gabriel that I learned there was at one time a "dark side" to his life in El Salvador. Until he trusted my identity and my motives, his impression management skills concealed important details of his post-deportation life. This may have been the case for several of my participants, especially those who believed their lives to be at risk.

Risk, Uncertainty, and the Termination of Data Collection

Rhetoric about violence and crime has become part of normal parlance in post-war El Salvador (Moodie 2010). Deported persons engaged in this practice in their interviews and interactions with me, describing wartime violence, family dysfunction, the institutional violence of the US deportation regime, and the symbolic violence of discourse that often conflates their identities with those of gang members. Some also felt compelled to warn me of the violence *I* might experience by engaging in research on deportation in El Salvador. I frequently heard the story of Christian Poveda, a filmmaker who was murdered in El Salvador after the release of *La Vida Loca*, a documentary about the everyday lives MS-13 gang members. Early on in the project one 18th Street gang member asked me “what are you trying to do, get yourself killed here?” Another participant told me about an academic whom he once “wanted dead” because of the ways the scholar interpreted gang issues in the Americas.

I heard stories of and indirectly experienced violence during my tenure in El Salvador. An American student visiting San Salvador through the *Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad* was robbed at gunpoint on a bus while I was there in 2008. My translator, Cristy, was held at gunpoint in 2010 while leading a tour for a group of students from the University of Michigan. When Cristy and I were leaving San Salvador to conduct interviews, we passed an apparently dead, tattooed male body on strewn across a sidewalk. When we returned to San Salvador another time, we were delayed for forty minutes by an assassination attempt of a prison warden who was also driving to the capitol. We passed through a checkpoint at the scene of the crime in which masked police or military agents, armed with guns, gazed with suspicion into passing passenger vehicles. The cumulative experience of hearing deportees’ encounters with wartime and contemporary violence, locals’ experiences of robbery and extortion, and these visible

spectacles of violence left me uncertain about my safety. One night, after learning about the murder of Victor, I reflected in my journal,

I am nervous. I feel my fight or flight response kicking in. I am constantly looking around at who is watching me or who might be following me. Sometimes I am paranoid in the hotel. What is that noise? Who is outside my room? I have no idea the extent to which these fears are real or imagined I feel like changing hotels. I feel like running to the countryside to complete the rest of my interviews. I feel like going home. I feel like *migrating*. I am learning, in a tiny but real way what it must be like for these [deported] men to live a country they don't know...But, I am on the fringe...and I have the privilege of leaving whenever I want.

I assumed my fears were inflated by Victor's death and my lack of social support in El Salvador. I continued with data collection. It was not until an interview with a man called Bobby in 2011 that felt my safety was compromised. Bobby shared the details of his incredibly violent upbringing in the US. He recounted a story in which his mother filled a sock with pennies and 'slammed me in the face with it' and another in which she also locked him in a bedroom for four months, only allowing him to exit to use the restroom. He also shared his struggle to survive in El Salvador, which paralleled that of other former gang members with weak ties to El Salvador. During his interview he expressed that he was low on cash and was sometimes pushed to do things he did not want to do. In the midst of his incredibly generous and compelling testimony, he offered me a cup of coffee and said,

I don't have no other choice, Katie. I'm sorry, man. I've sit here in El Salvador with thieves, killers. I know some of them. And when you sit with them, they're almost like, "Oh hey, how you doing, Katie? It's a pleasure meeting you! Would you like another coffee? Oh yeah? Let me put some sugar in that. There you go! Would you like another piece of bread?" They're the sweetest person. But when they're gone and they've got to go do their money, they be like, "Hey, what's up girl? Give me your money and shut the hell up! Bitch!" Katie, they don't want to do that. But, you know what? There's no other way out.

During our interview, a man had been wandering around, watching over us in a way that made me feel unsafe. I later learned Bobby was in need of a new identification card. He also made it clear that the organization responsible for helping him to avoid gang violence was in immediate need of four hundred dollars. I left the interview with the impression that I might be in danger if I did not assist financially. I doubled Bobby's financial incentive so he could

purchase new identification. I provided several hundred dollars of my own money to my gatekeeper, who operated the organization. After the exchange, the man who had been watching us disappeared. Bobby promised he would stay in touch with me via email. Though I hoped Bobby meant no harm, the next day I still felt insecure. I moved from my hotel to a location unknown to Bobby or his gatekeepers. I terminated data collection a week earlier than expected. I returned to the U.S. and I resumed my normal life, leaving behind the uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty I encountered in San Salvador. A few months later, I received an email from Bobby. He said,

God bless you katie how are you doing ..Im [Bobby]. I hope you remember me I went with [gatekeeper] for an interview with you here in el salvador and you thought I was going to rob you remember I told you I was going to write you..I just wanna say HI katie it was nice meeting you and if you ever need anything from el salvador you can count on me and please dont be scare of me I think you got a wonderfull heart and that you are going to help lots of people may the lord bless you in everything you do please writte me back I would love to here from you katie and here about you book you toll me you would writte God bless you friend this is my number if you ever need me ok. [phone number].

After reading Bobby's email, I wondered if I misinterpreted his signals during his interview. In those few moments of fear and uncertainty, did I unfairly reify him into the "criminal" he did not want to be or the "gangster" he was trying to avoid becoming? Was he a perpetrator of violence, a victim of society's and my own negative perceptions, or both? What are the consequences of labeling a person or an entire category of persons as threats to personal and national security without considering their life histories and the social facts that contributed to their personalities, behaviors, and identities? Can chronicling and contextualizing the lives of deported persons humanize them in ways that will promote the empowerment of persons like Bobby—and deportees more generally—rather than continued demonization and marginalization? Can such an effort help mitigate some of the negative effects of removal that reverberate throughout contemporary Salvadoran society? Questions such as these, I have found,

lay at the heart of the deportation crisis in El Salvador—and are also at the heart of this dissertation.

Data Analysis

The final sample size of deportee interviewees was 100. After I left the field in 2011, I continued collecting interviews in L.A. in El Salvador via Skype and with the help of a research assistant. We conducted interviews until the point of theoretical saturation when deportee narratives began to sound similar and my key research questions were addressed. The interviews with deportees and experts were eventually transcribed with the help of a team of undergraduate research assistants. Data from the pre-interview surveys were entered into a spreadsheet and were used to produce coversheets for each interview. These data were supplemented by field notes from the observations in non-profits and public spaces. Proceedings from the *Semana del Migrante* conference in San Salvador and the *Convention on the Rights of Forcibly Expelled Persons* conference in Boston were left un-transcribed, but also informed this study.

I employed a qualitative approach to data analysis. Each interview was coded by hand using techniques outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995). I listened and read through each interview “as if they had been written by a stranger” (Emerson et al. 1995:142). I then went through *open coding*, line-by-line or story-by-story as was appropriate, allowing themes to emerge inductively. Early on, I tried to entertain “all analytic possibilities, capture as many ideas and themes...without regard to how or whether the ideas and categories [would] ultimately be used” (Emerson et al. 1995:151). As my research questions solidified, I employed *selective open coding* which allowed me to focus on the objectives of the dissertation (Emerson et al. 1995). I highlighted quotes and took analytical and reflexive memos in a field journal. In next stage,

integrative coding, I used NVivo software to help organize codes, memos, and quotes. I produced taxonomies on deported persons' migratory histories, modes of incorporation in the U.S., detention and removal experiences, and their post-deportation re/integration.

Open and integrative coding was critical to understanding the most important themes in the lives of the people interviewed for this study. They were limited in their ability to assist with a casual argument. I turned to analytic induction to determine the factors, or combination of factors, that give rise to divergent post-deportation trajectories (Robinson 1951; Znaniecki 1934; Katz 1983). In this stage of analysis, I treated each deported person in the sample as a unique case. My undergraduate research assistants and I reviewed the cover sheets, codes, and memos for each interview. We prepared a 1-2 page summary page highlighting the individual's unique process of re/integration and the factors that gave rise to such an outcome. I sorted the cases into categories corresponding to their pathways to re/integration. I inspected and recorded, in an iterative way, the factors that gave rise to each pathway, revising the findings as new patterns emerged.

What follows should be viewed as an inductive, empirically driven hypothesis, or provisional theory, of deportee trajectories in El Salvador. The non-random sampling design and low sample size prevent me from making statistically generalizable claims about the entire deportee population. I am also dealing with narratives, which are inherently subjective, situational, and imperfect. The findings could change with a different set of data, a different investigator and research assistants, and with the passage of time. It remains that very little is known about the experience of deportation being deported to El Salvador. The stories and patterns that emerge from this analysis are not completely disconnected from "real events" that occurred in deportees' lives. They provide an incredibly rich portrayal of deportee re/integration

not possible through quantitative analysis. They provide a solid foundation for future research on deportation and deportee re/integration in El Salvador and other countries throughout the world.

CHAPTER 5

Divergent Post-Deportation Trajectories

Post-deportation trajectories are varied and perpetually emergent “messy points” of convergence between so-called *contexts of return* and deportees’ *individual characteristics* and *agentic responses* to their experience of social embeddedness. In El Salvador, the national context of return is characterized by a weak institutional framework for deportee re/insertion, a neoliberalized and highly stratified domestic economy, and state discourse and practices that conflate deportee identities with and gang identities. All of the deportees interviewed for this study experienced challenges “going home” to and “creating a home” within this environment. The form those struggles took, however, differed depending upon individuals’ demographic characteristics, migration histories, criminal histories, economic resources, and social ties. The factor most clearly responsible for divergent post-deportation trajectories, however, was the degree of acculturation and affiliation deportees retained to the U.S. after removal.

Daniel Kanstroom (2012) argues that the proliferation of restrictive immigration enforcement policies and practices in the U.S. over recent decades has resulted in the formation of a so-called *new American diaspora*. This diaspora “consists of a forcibly uprooted population of people with deep, cohesive, social and cultural connections” to the U.S. (2012;xi). It is largely concentrated by individuals who migrated from their countries-of-origin as youth and spent a substantial amount of time in the U.S. prior to removal. These migrants become socially embedded in U.S. society through school attendance, employment, and family formation. Despite their non-citizen status, they also integrate into their cultural repertoires ideas, behaviors, and practices associated with U.S. society. When they are deported, they are forced to return to

countries with which they have relatively little familiarity or connection. They must not only find ways to navigate ostensibly foreign social worlds, but do so while involuntarily separated from the people and financial capital they left behind in the U.S. (Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012).

Findings from this dissertation are consistent with Kanstroom's assertion. In El Salvador there exist at least two subpopulations of deportees who experience and respond to deportation in markedly different ways. *U.S. Nationals* are deported persons who resemble members of the new American diaspora. They are a population that migrated to the U.S. typically as children and adolescents and/or spent many years in the U.S. They had acculturated into U.S. culture and had strong social, economic, and psychocultural ties to the U.S. when they were deported. *Salvadoran Nationals* typically migrated as teenagers and adults and spent less than five years in the U.S. Compared to U.S. nationals this population remained more socially, financially, and culturally connected to El Salvador while they were abroad. They also achieved lower levels of acculturation to U.S. society. The two populations are also distinct from each other not only on the basis of their age of initial migration to the U.S. and the length of time abroad, however. They represent two cognizably different "types" or "cohorts" of migrants whose initial reasons for migration differ, as well as their linguistic capabilities, levels of education, reasons for removal, criminal and incarceration histories, and the location of their post-deportation residence (urban vs. rural). The goal of this chapter is to outline these various differences. They are addressed in summary below and in more exhaustive detail throughout the rest of the chapter.

Salvadoran Nationals

There were 55 Salvadoran nationals identified for this study. Salvadoran nationals represent the typical contemporary Salvadoran migrant and deportee. They grew up in mostly agricultural regions of El Salvador in crowded homes with insufficient income to survive or

become upwardly economically mobile. They typically emigrated as labor migrants during young adulthood, passed through Mexico with the assistance of a coyote, and entered the U.S. without authorization. They intended to work for a few years, send remittances home, and eventually return to El Salvador to settle. While abroad, they maintained ties to El Salvador through phone calls and remittances. They were all aware that they could be deported for lacking immigration documentation. Most were removed within a few years of their arrival to the U.S. for non-criminal immigration violations. Some were deported immediately upon arrival. Others secured employment, rented apartments, and purchased vehicles and other material goods. They reported low levels of gang-related activity in the U.S. and continued to identify as Salvadoran while abroad. After their deportations, the majority of these emigrants returned to live with their families in the same rural areas of El Salvador they had once left.

U.S. Nationals

There were 45 U.S. nationals identified. U.S. nationals generally emigrated as children during the civil war between 1980 and 1992. Most eventually obtained some form of immigration documentation and spent on average 19.5 years abroad. These deportees became fluent in English, obtained a high school diploma or GED, and adapted to U.S. norms. Many described their acculturation, identities, and loss of Salvadoran connections in the U.S. as a process of “becoming American.” Most did not have memories of El Salvador, did not sustain transnational family ties, and had no intentions of returning to settle. Three deportees could not speak Spanish conversationally and one did not know he was a Salvadoran national until he was in deportation proceedings. Approximately half of the interviewees believed permanent residency guaranteed them protection from deportation and the other half was ineligible or chose

not to adjust their status to permanent residency. Over half of the population was removed for gang-related and non-gang-related criminal convictions, ranging from public intoxication and DUIs, to child molestation and statutory rape, to armed robbery and attempted murder. All of them left family members behind in the U.S. and continued to communicate with them by phone and the Internet. Most U.S. nationals resided in urban areas post-removal. Three who had returned to the U.S. and were living in Los Angeles at the time of their interviews.

Portrait of the Sample

Demographics

This dissertation considers two demographic characteristics relevant to Salvadoran post-deportation trajectories. The first demographic factor to note is *age*. All of the study participants were adults at the time of their interview. They ranged from 18 to 69 years old, with a mean of 31.8 years. U.S. nationals and Salvadoran nationals were within the same age range; mostly young adults. At 32.9 years old U.S. nationals were on average two years older than Salvadoran nationals, who averaged 30.9 years. The second demographic to highlight is *gender*. 96 of the 100 participants identified as men and 4 as women. Gatekeepers had a hard time locating women to participate in the study. Still, the proportion of women interviewed remains representative of the total deportee population from the U.S. Of the 368,644 people ICE removed from the U.S. in 2013, only 7% were female and of those deported to El Salvador (TRAC Immigration 2014). Likewise, of those deported to El Salvador only 5.9% were women (TRAC Immigration 2014). Women seem to be deported at lower rates than men because they tend to occupy spaces in the U.S., like households, that are less visible to immigration authorities. They also report lower levels of gang membership and are convicted for crimes at lower rates than men.

Migration Histories

Table 5.1
Migration Histories of Sample of Salvadoran Deportees

Characteristic	Total (N=100)	US Nationals (N=45)		ES Nationals (N=55)	
	Mean	Mean		Mean	
Age at migration	15.2	8.7		20.4	
Years in US	10.8	17.8		5.0	
Age at removal	25.6	26.5		24.9	
Years since removal	6.1	6.5		5.7	
	<i>N and %</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Migratory Cohort					
Pre-War	7	6	0.13	1	0.02
Civil War	39	33	0.73	6	0.11
Post-War	54	6	0.13	48	0.87
Reason Migrated					
Economic	56	16	0.36	40	0.73
War	26	22	0.49	4	0.07
Family Reunification	12	6	0.13	6	0.11
Curiosity / Vacation	3	1	0.02	2	0.04
Gangs	3	0	0.00	3	0.05
Legal Status Achieved					
Undocumented	51	9	0.20	42	0.76
Permanent Resident	24	22	0.49	2	0.04
Asylum	6	5	0.11	1	0.02
TPS	7	2	0.04	5	0.09
Work Permit	5	3	0.07	2	0.04
Tourist or Student Visa	2	0	0.00	2	0.04
Unreported	5	4	0.09	1	0.02
Reason Removed					
Unlawful Presence	35	2	0.04	33	0.60
Crime	56	38	0.84	18	0.33
Unreported	9	5	0.11	4	0.07

As Table 5.1 shows, data was collected on several variables related to migration history. These include the age at original migration to the U.S., the period and reasons for migration, legal status in the U.S., the length of time spent in the U.S., the age at deportation, and the length of time deportees had been in El Salvador post-removal. The average *age at migration* for the total sample was 15.2 years, *length of time abroad* was 10.8 years, and *age at removal* was 25.6 years. As was expected, the U.S. nationals tended to migrate as children and spend more time in the U.S. The youngest U.S. national migrated in infancy, the oldest migrated at 19, and the mean

age at migration was 8.7 years. They averaged 17.8 years away from El Salvador, with a range of 5 to 31 years, and returned at a mean of 26.5 years old. Salvadoran nationals tended to migrate as teenagers and adults and spent significantly less time abroad. They left El Salvador between 13 and 36 years of age, averaging 20.4 years. They spent between 1 month and 15 years abroad, with an average of 5 years in the U.S., and were returned at a mean of 24.9 years old

The *migratory cohort* of the sample is somewhat consistent with the composition of the overall Salvadoran foreign-born population in the U.S. According to the Pew Research Center, 64% of the foreign-born Salvadoran population residing in the U.S. in 2011 arrived after the Salvadoran civil war's conclusion in 1992 (Brown and Patten 2013). Out of the total sample of deportees, over half, or 54%, migrated in 1993 or later. 7% migrated prior to the war in 1980 and 30% migrated during the war between 1980 and 1992. As with age at migration and length of time abroad, the migratory cohort of U.S. nationals and Salvadoran nationals diverged. U.S. nationals overwhelmingly migrated during the war. Of the 45 U.S. nationals, 33 migrated during the war, 6 migrated prior to the war, and 6 migrated since 1993. The Salvadoran nationals represented the opposite pattern. Of the 55 interviewees, 48 emigrated in the post-war years, 6 left El Salvador during the war, and 1 migrated prior to 1980.

Interviewees were asked their primary *migration motivation*. The majority, 54%, claimed their migration was economically motivated. Another 26% migrated due to wartime violence and uncertainty, 12% to reunify with family members, and 9% went to the U.S. out of curiosity (3%), to vacation (3%), or to escape gangs (3%). Among the 45 U.S. nationals, 22 (49%) left because of the war, 16 (36%) migrated for economic reasons, 6 (13 percent) went to reunify with family members, and 1 (2%) went for vacation and decided to stay permanently. Salvadoran nationals overwhelmingly migrated to escape poverty and inequality in El Salvador. Of the 55 Salvadoran

nationals interviewed, 42 (73%) left for economic reasons, 4 (7%) fled the war, 6 (11%) went to reunify with family, 2 (4%) migrated out of curiosity, and 3 (5%) fled gangs.

Deportees were asked to report on their *legal status upon arrival* to U.S. The vast majority, 87%, arrived to the U.S. without any documentation. Of the remaining 12%, 5 had a green card upon arrival, 5 entered on student or tourist visas, 2 reported they arrived ‘legally’ without further specification, and 1 did not provide his status. Most of the variation of legal status upon arrival was found among the U.S. nationals. Of the 45, 35 (78%) entered without documentation, 5 (11%) held green cards, 3 (7%) entered on visas, and 2 (4%) entered ‘legally.’ The Salvadoran nationals almost unanimously entered without a form of documentation. 53 of the 55 persons interviewed (96%) were undocumented upon arrival and 2 (4%) entered on temporary visas.

Study participants were also asked what form, if any, of *legal status achieved* prior to removal. Slightly over half, or 51%, remained undocumented, but many others adjusted to permanent residency or other temporary statuses. 24% obtained a green card either through family reunification provisions, asylum, or the amnesty offered through IRCA in 1986. Another 6% attained asylum but never adjusted to permanent residency. 12% received temporary protected status or a work permit, and 2% continued to live with a tourist or student visa. Of the U.S. nationals, 17 people adjusted their status to permanent residency such that 22 (49%) total U.S. nationals held green cards prior to removal. 5 U.S. nationals attained asylum (11%), 3 attained work permits (7%), 2 received TPS, and 4 did not report their immigration status prior to removal. 9 U.S. nationals were undocumented upon removal. Salvadoran nationals were significantly less likely to adjust their legal status. At the time of removal, 42 of the 55 (76%) were undocumented. 5 people (9%) had attained TPS, 2 people (4%) were granted permanent

residency, 2 (4%) obtained a work permit, 2 people (4%) continued living with a student or tourist visa, and 1 (2%) did not report his legal status at removal.

Deportees reasons for removal included both immigration violations and criminal convictions. 56% of the sample were removed for criminal offenses, 35 were removed for unlawful presence, and 9 people did not disclose why they were removed. U.S. nationals were much more likely than Salvadoran nationals to be deported for a crime. Of the 45 U.S. nationals, 38 persons (84%) were removed for criminal convictions, 2 (4%) for unlawful presence, and 5 (11%) were unreported. The Salvadoran nationals were much more likely to be removed for immigration offenses, though a solid portion had also committed deportable offenses. Of the 55 persons interviewed, 33 (60%) were removed for a lack of adequate documentation, 18 (33%) for a criminal conviction, and 4 (7%) for an unreported reason. As was highlighted in the previous chapter, of the 183,613 people removed to El Salvador between 1993 and 2012, only 37.6% (69,153) were for criminal offenses. It is thus clear that there is a significant oversampling of people deported for criminal offenses in this sample.

The final factor relevant to migration histories is the length of *time since removal* and deportees' interviews. It was an average 6.2 years since deportees' first removal from the U.S., with a range of less than a year to 34 years. One extreme outlier was deported in 1974. Seven individuals had been back since the late 1980s or early-1990s. The other 92 participants were removed since the changes to deportation law came about in 1996. Of those 92, 19 had been back to El Salvador a year or less. There was no significant difference between the length of time U.S. and Salvadoran nationals had been back in El Salvador since their first deportation. U.S. nationals had been back an average of 6.5 years and Salvadoran nationals had been back 5.7 years.

Criminal Histories

Deported persons in this sample maintained varying degrees of involvement with the criminal justice system prior to their deportations from the U.S. It should be noted that I oversampled for persons with criminal convictions and gang involvement in the U.S. This was largely because of the presumed relationship between gang membership and deportees in El Salvador. I needed a large enough sample to assess the validity of the confluence of those identities. More than other characteristics presented in this chapter, the findings in this section should not be seen as representative of the deportee population from the U.S. or of Salvadoran deportees.

Table 5.2
Criminal Histories of Sample of Salvadoran Deportees

Characteristic	Total (N=100)	US Nationals (N=45)		ES Nationals (N=55)	
	<i>N and %</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Incarceration in U.S.					
No	4	0	0.00	4	0.09
Yes	53	34	0.76	19	0.42
Unreported	43	11	0.24	32	0.58
Gang Membership in U.S.					
No	60	12	0.27	48	0.87
Yes	28	26	0.58	2	0.04
Unreported	12	7	0.16	5	0.09
Tattoos					
Yes	40	32	0.71	8	0.15
No	20	3	0.07	17	0.31
Unreported	40	10	0.22	30	0.55

Table 5.2 highlights that at least 53% of the total sample was *incarcerated* one of more times prior to their removal. A minimum of 34 of the 45 U.S. nationals (76%) were incarcerated at least once compared to 19 of the 55 Salvadoran nationals (42%). The majority, or 60%, of the deportee sample reported no history of *gang involvement* in the U.S. 28 % reported some degree of gang membership, and 12 % did not mention gang involvement. Of the 28 total persons who

claimed involvement in gangs, 26 (93%) of them were U.S. nationals and 2 (7%) were Salvadoran nationals. Thus, of the 45 U.S. nationals, 26 (58%) were in gangs in the U.S, 12 (27%) were not involved, and 7 (16%) did not report either way. Of the 55 Salvadoran nationals, 2 people (4%) affirmed involvement, 48 (87%) denied involvement in gangs in the U.S., and 5 (9%) did not include gang membership as part of their personal narrative.

Though U.S. nationals were more likely to be incarcerated and more likely to be involved in gangs, interestingly the *type of crimes* reported does not vary by generational status. Types of crimes reported by U.S. nationals included unlicensed driving, public intoxication, “traffic violation,” “a lot of minor crimes,” “felony,” theft, credit fraud, driving under the influence, drug possession, drug sales, drug trafficking, statutory rape, domestic abuse, assault with a deadly weapon, ‘drive-by shooting,’ robbery, grand theft auto, and attempted murder. Types of crimes reported by Salvadoran nationals included driving without a license, “caught driving through a checkpoint,” probation violation, “falsified document,” drug possession, driving under the influence, criminal trespassing, child molestation, assaulting a child, armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, aggravated robbery, and “attempted murder for a stabbing in a street fight.”

A final factor related to criminal history is markers associated with criminality or gangs. In the Salvadoran context, *tattoos* have reportedly served as sufficient indicators to presume gang membership even though those tattoos may not be gang related. Of the 100 people sampled, 40 reported tattoos, 20 said they did not have tattoos, and 40 did not mention tattoos in their narratives. Of those 40 persons that reported tattoos, 32 (80%) were U.S. nationals and 8 (20%) were Salvadoran nationals. Of the 45 U.S. nationals, 32 people reported tattoos (71%), 3 stated they did not have tattoos (7%), and 10 did not mention them (22%). Of the 55 Salvadoran

nationals, 8 reported tattoos (15%), 17 stated they did not have them (31%), and 30 did not mention them either way (55 %).

Economic Resources

Table 5.3
Economic Resources of Sample of Salvadoran Deportees

Characteristic	Total (N=100)	US Nationals (N=45)		ES Nationals (N=55)	
	Mean	Mean		Mean	
Highest education	9.3	10.9		7.9	
	<i>N and %</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Highest Education					
1-5 years	12	1	0.02	11	0.20
6-8 years	23	5	0.11	18	0.33
9-11 years	22	10	0.22	12	0.22
12 years - some college	42	29	0.64	13	0.24
Linguistic Ability					
Spanish only	52	4	0.09	48	0.87
Bilingual	46	39	0.87	7	0.13
English only	2	2	0.04	0	0.00

To measure deportees’ economic resources, questions were asked about their highest level of education and their linguistic capabilities. The total sample had attained an average of 9.3 years of *education*. With a mean of 10.9 years of schooling U.S. nationals were more highly educated than Salvadoran nationals, who attained a mean of 7.9 years. For both groups, the lowest-educated migrant attained only two years of formal education and the highest educated attended some community college classes. However, Salvadoran nationals were more likely to not surpass primary school. U.S. nationals were more likely to attain a high school diploma or equivalency. Of the 12 people in the sample that attained between 1 and 5 years of school, 11 of them were identified as Salvadoran nationals and 1 was a U.S. national. Conversely, of the 42 people who graduated from high school or obtained a G.E.D., 29 of them were identified as U.S. nationals. The reasons why persons left school or did not pursue higher education after high

school were financial for both populations. In El Salvador, many individuals left school to work on agricultural fields, sell food and goods at local markets, or to migrate to the U.S. In the U.S., several dropped out of high school to work or because they had become entrenched in gangs on the streets. Several persons in the U.S. had dropped out of school prior to completion, but eventually attained a G.E.D., usually while incarcerated.

Perhaps not surprisingly, *linguistic capabilities* were highly correlated with degree of affiliation with the U.S. or El Salvador. 52% of the sample only spoke in Spanish, 2% spoke only in English, and 46% claimed to be bilingual, at least verbally. Of the 55 Salvadoran nationals, 48 (87%) spoke Spanish-only and 7 were bilingual. Of the 45 U.S. nationals, 4 (9%) spoke Spanish-only, 2 (4%) spoke English-only, and 39 (87%) were bilingual. Overall, linguistic capabilities of the sample were comparable to those of the Salvadoran foreign-born population in the U.S. more generally. According to Pew Research Center, nearly half (48%) of Salvadorans ages 5 and older in the U.S. speak English proficiently (Brown and Patten 2013). If the findings from this sample can be treated as indicative, the vast majority of these English-speaking individuals may be classified as U.S. nationals despite their Salvadoran citizenship and ethnic identity.

Social Ties

Table 5.4
Social Ties of Sample of Salvadoran Deportees

Characteristic	Total (N=100)	US Nationals (N=45)		ES Nationals (N=55)	
	<i>N and %</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Marital Status					
Single	33	15	0.33	18	0.33
Accompanied	22	6	0.13	16	0.29
Married	21	12	0.27	9	0.16
Divorced / Separated	9	6	0.13	3	0.05
Unreported	15	6	0.13	9	0.16
Family Ties - E.S.					
Yes	83	30	0.67	53	0.96
No	5	5	0.11	0	0.00
Unreported	12	10	0.22	2	0.04
Family Ties - U.S.					
Yes	60	34	0.76	26	0.47
No	6	3	0.07	3	0.05
Unreported	34	8	0.18	26	0.47

A final set of measures refer to the social ties. Table 5.4 highlights the marital status and the location of deportees' family ties. The marital status of the total population varied greatly. Most deportees, 33, were single. 22 people were in committed, non-marital relationships. 21 people were married. 9 were either divorced or separated. 15 people did not report their marital status. The pattern in marital status was similar between U.S. nationals and Salvadoran nationals, though U.S. nationals were more likely to be married than accompanied and Salvadoran nationals were more likely to be accompanied than married. U.S. nationals were also more likely to be divorced or separated than Salvadoran nationals. Of the 45 U.S. nationals, 15 were single (33%), 6 were accompanied (13%), 12 were married (27%), 6 were divorced or separated (13%), and 6 did not report their status (13%). Of the 55 Salvadoran nationals, 18 were single (33%), 16 were accompanied (29%), 9 were married (16%), 3 were divorced or separated (5%), and 9 did not report their marital status (16%).

The majority of deportees had some form of social ties to El Salvador. 83 of the 100 deportees mentioned the existence of some sort of *family ties to El Salvador*. Of the remaining

17 people, 12 did not mention such ties, and 5 reported no family ties to the country. As is expected, U.S. transnationals reported lower levels of connection. 30 people affirmed familial ties, 5 reported no ties, and 10 did not mention such ties. Salvadoran nationals were highly connected. 53 persons reported family ties and 2 did not mention El Salvador-based family in their narratives. Regarding *family ties to the U.S.*, 60 people mentioned they had family in the U.S. after their deportation. Of the 40 remaining, 6 reported they did not have any family ties to the U.S. and 34 people did not disclose such ties. U.S. nationals were more likely than Salvadoran nationals to discuss U.S.-based family ties. 34 U.S. nationals had family ties to the U.S., 3 did not, and 8 did not mention such ties. 26 Salvadoran nationals reported family in the U.S., 3 had no family in the U.S., and 26 did not mention such ties in their narratives. Even if they did have transnational ties, the fact that they were more likely not to mention them when discussing their post-deportation experiences indicates such ties are less salient for Salvadoran nationals.

Table 5.5
Children of Sample of Salvadoran Deportees

Characteristic	Total (N=100)	US Nationals (N=45)		ES Nationals (N=55)	
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Number of Children	1.86	2.4		1.4	
	<i>N and %</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Parental Status					
Children	82	39	0.87	43	0.78
No Children	15	5	0.11	10	0.18
Unreported	3	1	0.02	2	0.04
Children - U.S.					
Yes	32	26	0.58	6	0.11
No	42	10	0.22	32	0.58
Unreported	26	9	0.20	17	0.31
Children - ES.					
Yes	54	23	0.51	31	0.56
No	20	13	0.29	7	0.13
Unreported	26	9	0.20	17	0.31
Number of Children					
In U.S.	77	70	0.91	7	0.09
In E.S.	109	37	0.34	72	0.66
Total	186	107	0.58	79	0.42

A final set of factors relevant to social ties is related to deportees' children. The sample had a range of 0 to 7 children, with an average of 1.86. U.S. nationals (2.4) had more children on average than Salvadoran nationals (1.4). Of the 107 children of U.S. nationals, 70 (65.4%) lived in the U.S. and 37 (34.6%) were in El Salvador. Of the 79 children had by Salvadoran nationals, 7 (8.9%) of them were in the U.S. and 72 (91.1%) of them were in El Salvador. Overall, both U.S. nationals and Salvadoran nationals left behind 77 children in the U.S. when they were removed, and had another 109 children in El Salvador. As is expected, U.S. nationals left substantially more children behind after deportation than Salvadoran nationals, whose children were more likely to be in El Salvador.

Three Key Post-Deportation Trajectories

The transnational discourse surrounding Salvadoran deportees' removal from the US implies that the majority, if not all, post-deportation "homecomings" to the country will be problematic or "impossible" endeavors. This dissertation demonstrates that the narrative of the "violent gang-member deportee" plays a powerful role in shaping the ways in which individuals experience, respond to, and talk about their return and reintegration. For some, it penetrates their lives so intensely that being a deportee becomes a master status that shapes practically all other interactions they have in the country. However, this is not the only way in which deportation is experienced. The Salvadoran social, economic, and political *context of return* – and all of its local variations – interplays with deportees' migratory histories (such as their age at original migration, length of time abroad, and age of deportation) to produce a range of outcomes that vary from complete acceptance to life threatening marginalization.

The following three vignettes are offered to highlight some of the most common post-deportation “starting points” and subsequent pathways to reintegration reported by the deportees profiled above. Each story should be seen as an ideal type for the following chapters. The first person, Juan, represents a Salvadoran national whose experiences are unpacked in Chapter 6. The second person, Freddy, is a U.S. national without a gang history. Post-deportation experiences similar to his are discussed at length in Chapter 7. The final person is Ernie, who represents a gang member in El Salvador, a trajectory discussed in Chapter 8.

Juan Ayala (#74)

Juan Ayala was born and raised in a small, isolated, agricultural town in the district of Chalatenango, situated in the northern part of El Salvador near the Honduran border. The area was deeply affected by the Salvadoran civil war in the late 1980s, which resulted in the displacement of nearly the entire town’s population. Upon the termination of the war, the majority of the community – especially those who migrated to Guatemala, Honduras, and San Salvador – repatriated to the region and attempted to rebuild their lives. Postwar economic struggles, however, promoted the subsequent emigration of a large portion of the town to the United States. This initial outflow inspired a chain- or web-like pattern of emigration that continues on a large scale today. As much as 40% of the local population can currently be found in the US, concentrated mostly in the state of Virginia. It was within this migratory context that Juan first decided to migrate abroad.

Juan was from a Christian household that he described as “united,” at least emotionally. He was the youngest of several siblings, many of whom were already living in the US with extended family members. Juan remained in El Salvador with his parents who always impressed

upon him the importance of education and staying out of trouble. He attended school, received good grades, and maintained positive peer relationships. Upon graduation from high school, family living in the US agreed to loan him money to either further his education in El Salvador or go to the US. Aware of his parents' financial struggles and the poor economic conditions of El Salvador in general, Juan decided that there was a better chance of repaying the loan if he went to the US than if he attended college locally. And so, in 2003 at the age of 22, he made the journey north with the assistance of a *coyote* (smuggler). After a dramatic passage through Guatemala and Mexico, Juan entered the US without inspection and without documentation.

Juan was eventually transported to Virginia, where he was greeted by siblings, extended family, and several childhood friends. He reported that, at first, it was difficult to adjust to life as an undocumented immigrant in the US. Without access to a vehicle and fearful that he would be detained by police officers, he closely monitored his mobility. Eventually he was able to obtain steady employment at a company that paid him \$14 to \$15 an hour, which permitted him to purchase a car and move around with greater ease. In his free time, Juan socialized with friends and family from his hometown, but always remained connected to El Salvador. He telephoned his family and friends on occasion and sent monthly remittances to supplement his parents' income and provide for entertainment, such as parties and sports equipment, for his friends. He enjoyed life in the United States, "especially because it is so easy to obtain whatever you want," but his heart always remained in El Salvador. He worked hard to save money so that when he someday returned, he would be able to construct his own home, start his own business, avoid becoming a financial burden on his family, and possibly afford to travel back and forth between El Salvador and the US if it ever became necessary.

In 2008, after living nearly six years in Virginia, Juan's workplace was raided and he was deported for illegal entry. Although he was a little worried that the community "wouldn't be the same," and his friends wouldn't remember him, Juan reported that he had no fear of returning. He knew that he would be warmly accepted home because he stayed out of trouble and always supported his family financially while he was abroad. This was critical information that he was confident already traveled through the transnational rumor-mill prior to his arrival in Chalatenango. His presumptions were largely correct. It was necessary for him to verbally verify with his mother and certain members of the community that he did not commit a crime while abroad. But, once he performed this ritual, everyone was not only happy to have him back, but sympathetic to the "injustice" he encountered while abroad. "It was emotional," he stated, "I felt like they still loved me. One feels really happy to once again see the people that one loves."

Since his return to El Salvador, Juan was not only accepted back into his community, but was able to build a new life for himself. He used his savings from the US to construct a house and purchase a microbus, the latter of which he uses to taxi locals to and from San Salvador and the international airport. This proved to be a rather lucrative investment, earning him on average \$840 USD per month, a substantial amount over the Salvadoran minimum wage of \$207.68. Juan also got married and had a daughter. The existence of this new family in El Salvador, combined with the warm reception he felt upon his return, the financial stability afforded by his original migration, and the fear of having to pass through Mexico again, prevents him from actively planning to return to the US in the near future. "For me," he stated, "the word 'home' means 'family' ... (to have them) as close to you as possible, the wife and children." The location of home in geographic space, however, is contingent upon future material conditions. Although he is currently firmly planted in El Salvador, he could imagine crafting a future life in the United

States. He explained, "... I don't want the same things to happen to my kids that I lived. Truthfully, (in the US), they could have a better education and have the things that I could not have." Leaving his options open, he continued, "We will see..."

Freddy Mendoza (#6)

Freddy Mendoza migrated to the US in 1985 at the age of 5. His mother and father had already been living in the US for 3 years when they sent for him, his brother, and the aunt with whom they were living. Because of his young age, Freddy could not recall any memories of the migratory journey they took through Guatemala and Mexico nor of the life that he led in El Salvador prior to the migration. When he arrived in the US, he was reunited with his parents in Los Angeles where he reportedly grew up like "a typical American" in spite of his undocumented status. The family resided in a predominately Korean neighborhood, but Freddy recalls that most of his and his parents' friends were White. His mother and father had been taking English classes since they had been in the US and made sure that the only language spoke in the house was English. It was not until eleventh grade that Freddy decided to learn Spanish so that he had the required 2 years of a "foreign language" necessary to get him into college.

Around age seventeen, Freddy's mother and father naturalized as US citizens. They petitioned for their children to become permanent residents. Freddy received his work permit while his green card application was pending. This allowed him to work various jobs, including catering, which inspired in him a passion for cooking. When he graduated from high school, Freddy began attending community college, where he took over 50 units in fields ranging from culinary arts to business to the social sciences. He planned to transfer his credits and eventually obtain a four-year degree, study abroad in France, and become a chef. However, these dreams

were interrupted in 2004 when he was detained and eventually deported for a non-gang related criminal offense that occurred in 2001. Freddy reported that he was “ashamed” of his “mistake” and, for that reason, never told his White friends, nor this researcher, what happened. He preferred to disappear for a while as if he were on vacation and then reappear in the US shortly after his removal.

Prior to his deportation, Freddy had no intentions of ever returning to El Salvador to settle. He imagined that once he had his green card he might visit the country “just to find out about my background, my roots and all of that ... I was always interested in different cultures as well ... like the Mayans, the Aztecs, and the Incas and all of that. That shit is interesting.” In spite of these anthropological interests, while he was in detention contemplating his deportation, Freddy reported that he was scared of being killed in El Salvador because he had tattoos, which he heard were sufficient evidence to presume someone was a deported gang member. Moreover, he felt “betrayed” by the government of the country he considered to be his home. “It's a horrible feeling. It's like you know you will be so far away from your family, you know. And your friends, and your whole life is just like ripped in front of you. You just ... they pull you out of everything you know in your life. They take your life from you. And they are putting you in a country where you like know nothing of. You barely know how to speak the language that they actually speak there and all of that. No, it's horrible. I can't explain it.”

Once he arrived in El Salvador, Freddy went to live with his grandma in San Salvador. He reported that she, “had to take him in” because his parents supported her financially through monthly remittances. Although his grandma did not know any English, when he first met her, Freddy said “hi” because he was not comfortable saying “hola” in Spanish. Upon his arrival, he reported that there was a lot of violence committed against him. “I got robbed a couple times. I

got beat up a couple times.” He also encountered problems with police officers who would harass him by asking him to take off his shirt to prove he was not a gang member. People in general also looked at him with suspicion. “I mean, they give you that look like this guy is a hoodlum just because I have tattoos here. They judge you without even knowing you.” For these reasons, Freddy largely constrained himself to his grandmother’s house and quickly returned to the US after a month with funds provided by his parents.

Upon his clandestine return to the US, Freddy resettled in Virginia, where he continued to work and attend college. In 2008, after a college party, he was arrested for public intoxication. He planned to only spend the night in county jail sobering up, but once again landed in removal proceedings because his fingerprints indicated that he was not authorized to be in the country. Since arriving in El Salvador after his second deportation, Freddy learned to avoid contentious interactions by behaving “like a tourist.” He avoided eye contact by sporting dark sunglasses, wore long-sleeved collared shirts to hide his tattoos, lived off remittances provided by his parents, and only ate in restaurants that can be found in the United States, such as Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Boldly distancing himself from the average Salvadoran citizen, he declared, “I do not buy your pupusas (a typical Salvadoran food) from down on the ground. Are you kidding me?! Do you see how much smog is out there?” After hearing rumors that foreign-owned telecommunications companies such as Dell, Inc. hired deportees with English and computer skills and paid up to \$500 USD per month, Freddy applied for customer service positions at various firms throughout San Salvador and was awaiting their response at the time of the interview for this project.

In spite of the more advanced coping techniques he developed after his second deportation, Freddy reported that he still had no intentions of remaining in El Salvador. Shortly

before his interview in 2008, he had a conversation with his mother. She had arranged for him to be transported to Mexico and then flown to Italy, where he would live and study culinary arts for four to five years while the ban on his re-entry to the US expired. At that point he would re-apply for admission and return to the United States legally, though it is unlikely he would be granted re-admission with a record of two prior deportations. When asked what he imagined he would be doing in ten to twenty years, he quickly replied, “I will be back at home in the US ... running my own business – my own restaurant or my own hotel ... I should probably have two kids by that time and be married.” He also planned to publish a book of memoirs on his life experiences, including, most notably, his deportations to El Salvador – the country of his citizenship and the site of his anthropological inquiry, but certainly not his home.

Ernie Martínez (#39)

Ernie Martínez grew up in San Salvador in the midst of the Salvadoran civil war. Although the majority of the fighting occurred outside of the capital, Ernie reported that there was a lot of activity in his neighborhood. One of his neighbors was involved in the guerilla, another was a sergeant in the army, and several members of his extended family were government soldiers. He has specific memories of spending time with the sergeant before he went to the US at the age of 11. It was from him that Ernie was taught how to hold an M-16 and other guns. He also witnessed kidnapped people being held hostage, wearing masks and handcuffed and “waiting for food or water and claiming, “Hey, let me go. Call my family. They will pay you.” He also remembers seeing dead bodies in the streets – something he reported made him believe killing was normal. “I could kill someone because that’s normal. That’s what the war showed me.”

Ernie lived in a poor neighborhood with his grandparents on his father's side, his dad, and two aunts. The household dynamics were perpetually turbulent. In 1983, his grandmother died of cancer and left the family a significant sum of money. One of his aunts put her share of the money toward a college education and eventually became a psychologist. The rest of the family wasted their shares on parties and alcohol. Ernie's father was an alcoholic and his other aunt was engaged in prostitution. He reported clear memories of his dad and grandpa beating up his aunts. The same aunts would, in turn, beat him up "for nothing" and constantly encourage him to move out of the house because he was a financial drain on the family.

As a child, Ernie was made to believe that his grandparents were his parents and that his real father was his older brother. He did not know of his mother's existence until the age of ten when he discovered a picture of her at Disneyland. When he questioned the family about the photo, the truth about his real parents was revealed. His traumatic discovery prompted Ernie to begin hanging out with, "the big boys, you know, the ones that smoke weed." He and his four new friends would skip school, go out to the coffee fields, do drugs, and complain about their families together. Approximately a year later, Ernie's grandfather on his mother's side traveled from the US to El Salvador, where he discovered the problems with which Ernie was struggling. He encouraged Ernie's mom to remit \$5000 USD to have the boy smuggled into the US. En route through Mexico, Ernie witnessed robberies, rapes, and even a murder. These experiences reaffirmed his belief that brutality and murder were normal, even necessary, behaviors for human survival.

Once he arrived in Los Angeles, Ernie's reunion with his mother was far from warm. He reported that she was always busy working cleaning houses and pushing drugs to provide for him and his siblings. He always suspected that she was engaged in prostitution, but it wasn't until he

was 13 or 14 years old that he caught her in the act. She hit him and reacted by hanging out more with his older brother who was a member of the infamous Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gang. Ernie reported that he managed to always maintain good grades while he was in the US, but that racial tensions in his school reinforced his developing oppositional identity. He ran away from his house and became a full-fledged member of the gang after an incident with a group of Armenians at school nearly brought about the death of his brother. In the years that followed, he engaged in extortions, robberies, and drug sales. He used the money he earned to not only live independent of his mother, but also purchase guns and name-brand items that carried status in the gang, such as Nike shoes and Levi jeans. He tattooed his body with gang markings from nearly head to toe. His identity became tied up with the gang – and he completely repressed memories of his prior life in El Salvador.

Although he was aware that his lack of immigration documentation and criminal activities could result in removal from the US, Ernie had no intention of ever returning to El Salvador. Regardless, heavy involvement in MS-13 eventually brought about the death of Ernie's brother and his own deportation at the age of 17 in 1992. In retrospect, he reported no fear of deportation. "I came happy because I was gonna be the first members of the gang ... I'm a part of those people, the original people ... That's why I came happy because I was gonna like *fundar* (found) – to do another clique and it's gonna be better and bigger." When he actually returned, Ernie avoided his old neighborhood and got directly involved with his gang "family" in El Salvador. He reported that the experience was like, "coming from the future to the past." Kids in his neighborhood admired him saying things like, "Oh wow, you're over here! You've got Nike's! You've got Levi's!" He would respond with, "But those things are easy to do it ... Okay, you just have to do this, this, and this ... You wanna be from the MS gang?" When asked what

he would direct the youth to do if they demonstrated true interest in joining the gang, Ernie replied, “Tiene que, tiene que (you have to, you have to), you know, kill someone.”

Before too long, Ernie was recognized as a critical member of MS-13. He became a target of *La Sombra Negra* (The Black Shadow), a vigilante force composed mostly of former government military personnel and police officers that covertly carried out disappearances and murders of gang members and other individuals considered political radicals in El Salvador in the mid-1990s. He reported that he was always, “hiding, hiding, hiding, and hiding because, *man*, they were *killing* people!” Although he held a position of power in MS-13 in El Salvador, Ernie made five attempts to return to the US because it was easier to make money there. He received easy passage from smugglers and members of Mexico’s cartel *La Familia de Michoacán* because of, “who I was.” He was deported 2 times from Mexico and 3 times from the US, the last of which was in 1999 after a lengthy prison sentence for illegal re-entry and a probation violation from an earlier robbery.

Since 1999, Ernie has remained in El Salvador. Because of his tattoos and his notorious identity in general, he has been detained by police officials over twenty times and has served at least two prison sentences. It was inside prison in 2006 that he met a local pastor who engages in anti-gang outreach in El Salvador. The pastor, who was once a gangster himself, has since helped Ernie transition to an inactive gang member. He encouraged his attendance at Church and helped him remove the majority of his visible tattoos. Ernie also met his wife and had a child with her in 2009. His 15-month old son, in particular, reinforces Ernie’s desire to avoid active involvement in MS-13. He reported, “I don’t want my boy to pass all the things that I’ve been with me, you know. I’m worried about my boy.” However, Ernie is also acutely aware that he can never completely renounce his gang involvement. His wife is an MS gang member and they continue

to live in an MS-dominated neighborhood. He has also retained all of his non-visible tattoos. He stated, “I don’t know what to do sometimes because if I took the decision that, ‘I’m out right now,’” then maybe tomorrow I’ll be dead. If I’m like, ‘Estoy tranquilo, solo estoy calmado (I’m tranquil, I’m calm),’ then they respect. ‘órale, simon! (Okay, right on!)’ That’s it.”

Ernie’s national identity is complicated by his familial, migratory, and gang histories. He reported that although he is “from up there (in the US),” his home is in El Salvador. Many of his formative experiences were in the US, but he reports that he will not attempt to return again. This is not because of a fear of “la migra” or prison, but rather because the territorial reign of *Los Zetas* – enemies of MS-13 and La Familia – along the migratory route through Mexico. “I don’t want to be ... to be killed.” At least in El Salvador, he stated, “they know me.” At least in the contentious home he crafted there, he can be assured a proper burial. Although he was hopeful God will give him a second chance at building a better life for his son, he is almost certain that his past will bring about his death. When he is killed in El Salvador, he will not be forgotten, as he would be if he were to be murdered in Mexico. Instead, they will say, “‘Ah, Ernie! Okay! Ernie got killed. Let’s put him to the cemetery.’ And then they’d talk to my family.”

CHAPTER 6

Hermano, Bienvenido a Casa:

“Los Estados Unidos es color de rosas, decían a nosotros.”
-Sergio Banegas, 24

“We are Salvadorans. We are from here.
There is no need to compare ourselves to the Gringos.”
-Sergio Portillo, 28

This chapter focuses on the experiences of *Salvadoran nationals*, a population that seems to represent *El Hermano Lejano* incarnate. The group consists mostly of post-war economic sojourners; adventurous risk-takers willing to chase the elusive “American Dream.” They traveled to the U.S. mostly as adults usually undocumented and by land in order to find a solution to the financial deprivation that they and their families endured in El Salvador. Their dreams were abruptly halted when they were placed in detention and removal proceedings and sent back to El Salvador. Many Salvadoran nationals had barely entered the U.S. when they were apprehended and removed. Others lived longer in the U.S., where they gradually grew more comfortable, but they never established a sense of authentic belonging in the country. Most lived highly constrained existences, moving as efficiently as possible between work and residence, while saving money to send back to their families in El Salvador. The majority planned to someday return to their country-of-origin after they had accomplished their economic objectives, but they certainly did not plan to return as deportees.

The post-deportation trajectories of Salvadoran nationals diverged greatly from those of U.S. Nationals. The population was aware of the stereotypes and dangers surrounding deportee identities in El Salvador. Many were nervous about how they would be treated when they returned to El Salvador. They often were compelled to “prove” to family and community

members that they were well-behaved while abroad. A key part of this process of proving that they were “good migrants” involves the telling of their migratory story. These stories weaved elements of victimization and triumph in ways that play into the imagery of *El Hermano Lejano*. Another part of the process involved rhetorically distancing themselves from “*los deportados*” (the deportees) a group of problematic returnees usually imagined as U.S. national gang members with whom they do not want to be associated. After engaging in this ritual, most Salvadoran nationals reported feeling warmly welcomed “home” in their communities.

Though Salvadoran nationals reported relatively higher levels of psychocultural and social network embeddedness compared to U.S. nationals, they unanimously struggled to survive in the poor economic context of return. The economic climate represents Salvadoran nationals’ greatest post-deportation barrier. Because of the migratory debt they sometimes incurred and the lack of jobs available in their local economies, they often faced a similar or worse economic situation than they did prior to their initial migrations. Thus, though Salvadoran nationals feel like El Salvador is and will always be their national “home,” poor prospects for building economically sustainable lives lead most of them consider re-migrating to the U.S. The consideration of emigration out of economic necessity, however, does not make them significantly different from the local population, the majority of who also keep migration as an option against risk. Thus, what might look like a low level of economic embeddedness among Salvadoran nationals is actually consistent with the status quo for Salvadoran laborers in the post-war economy.

The Migratory Journey

Rodríguez (2002) claims that contemporary Central American labor migrants “personify the (un)sung heroes of legendary border crossing, their monumental efforts to reach safe haven in the United States undocumented and unrecognized.” Indeed, the voices of Salvadoran nationals interviewed for this project have been systematically silenced by the politics of immigration in the U.S. But their epic migratory journeys to the U.S. were at the heart of their personal narratives. Several of them told lengthy stories about their journeys through Mexico, describing the events they experienced along the way as traumatic and life altering; but also part of the sacrifice that must be made if they are to improve their socioeconomic condition and those of their families (see also Abrego 2014).

The tale of Alfonso Rivas, 21, is representative of the types of stories and experiences recounted by Salvadoran nationals. Alfonso traveled to the U.S. at the age of 19. Like many youth from his rural village, Alfonso was “always with a dream to go to the United States.” His mother had migrated to the U.S. when he was only a year old. Alfonso longed to both be reunited with her and to “work and have a home and a better job.” His goal was to become “a professional,” ideally an attorney. Though he loved his native country and the family and friends he established there, he believed that the U.S. promised the possibility of upward economic mobility. Unlike El Salvador, he said, “all of the hours that you put into your work have a better retribution.” Alfonso managed to wait until he graduated secondary school to emigrate, but shortly thereafter he, his cousin, and his close friend all embarked together on their long-awaited journeys to the U.S.

Like most Salvadoran nationals, the young men were armed with great ambition, but few resources. The journey was smooth until they entered Mexico. It was in the Southern state of Chiapas that they began to travel by train (“la bestia”) and slept on railroads that were plagued

by robberies and abuses. Alfonso reported that he saw some people raped and others thrown off the train by persons trying to rob them. He declared, “While we were resting, I saw how other people were assaulting others, and also raping them. Or the bandits used to come up to the train to assault everybody. And if that person wasn’t giving anything to them, they will push you to the ground while the train was moving.” Alfonso also painfully recalled that, while still in Chiapas, his cousin and his friend went missing. He said, “I got very nervous because I saw that in the front of the wagon I saw some thieves assaulting people and they were coming to the wagon where I was. That’s when I decided to jump off the train near some hills.” That night, Alfonso re-traced his tracks back across the Guatemalan border, but he was unable to find his friend or cousin. They had disappeared and were never to be found.

Determined to continue his journey North, Alfonso returned to Mexico where he “encountered some good people who offered me a phone to call my other to make contact.” He told his mother of his tribulations and requested that she arrange for a coyote to transport him to the U.S. The coyote met Alfonso in Tijuana, where he was meant to cross the border with a group of Mexican immigrants. Like Andreas (2001) discussed his portrayal of the dynamics between immigration enforcement officials and migrants, the experience of crossing was described by Alfonso as a “game of cat and mouse.” The coyote informed the group that ICE was surely patrolling the U.S. side of the border. It would be safest if they wait until night and then cross through a “big pond of sewage” where there was known to be a crocodile. Even that route could not guarantee entry to the U.S., however. Alfonso described his experience of avoiding apprehension despite the fact that the rest of the group was captured:

“I remember that we had to get through this black river of used water. We were only with our underwear. The coyote was telling us that we had to go in the middle of the river. And in order to float in the water, they put all of our clothing in like twenty bags. That was like our floatation device to get through. When I realized that everybody was stopped by the police on the other side...I decided to continue swimming in the black river. I went under the water using the plastic

bags as a float. But at that time I was alone without the coyote to guide me...I was not stopped by the police in the States, but I remember that when I was swimming in the river, they used to throw pepper gas to make you cry in order to stop me from crossing the river. That was the United States immigration police.”

Alfonso traveled alone through the “black river of used water” throughout the rest of the night. The next day he met his coyote back at their initial meeting spot in Tijuana. He then traveled with a new group of migrants across the border, this time by land. Alfonso explained:

“The coyote brought very hard tortillas and a piece of meat. And I remember that we were only allowed to bring one bottle of water to keep our tongues wet. We were hiding under an orange tree. We had to hide there because there was an airplane that was patrolling the area looking for migrants. Also, I remember that the coyote from other side was waiting for us And I remember that we were told to walk backward so that the migration thought that were weren’t trying to cross. I remember that I also had to hide from the immigration police in the thorny bushes in order to prevent the police from seeing us.”

Upon arrival in the U.S. a coyote transported Alfonso to a house in Phoenix, while where he was contained with other migrants for fifteen days. A van eventually arrived to transport him and several others to Los Angeles. However, shortly after their departure they were stopped by the police. They “were able to escape” and returned back to the house, where they stayed for another fifteen days. On a second attempt to leave Phoenix by bus they were once again stopped by police. This time, however, Alfonso was unable to escape apprehension. He and the other immigrants were immediately transferred into the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and were placed into removal proceedings. While in detention, Alfonso was bullied by “a Honduran” and he ended up getting into a fight. The incident landed him in solitary confinement. A religious person, Alfonso said that throughout his stay in detention “I was afraid to death, to death.” He looked forward to returning to El Salvador where he could be reunited with his family and friends. When he went back to his village “everyone was so happy; happy because I wasn’t injured and happy because they said God brought me back safe.”

Life in the U.S.

Salvadoran nationals reported a profound ambivalence regarding life in the United States. Most Salvadoran nationals reported positive first impressions of the U.S., including its sights, its culture, and its people. Though his stay in the U.S. was brief, Alfonso reported seeing “a lot of pretty neighborhoods. I wanted to work and get one of those houses...to build one here in El Salvador.” Paco Torres, 25, spent significantly more time in the U.S.; a total of six year. Though the process of deportation was traumatic for him, he, like many Salvadoran nationals, reflected positively on the U.S. more generally. He said, “I feel like the people were friendly. Even if they didn’t know me they offered me a job. More educated; I noticed that was a change from here. There were no delinquents, like there are so many here....And we could say that when I came to Pennsylvania they took me to Philadelphia, to know the city of Philadelphia. And from there to New York City and Jersey City. Lots of cities—and Chicago! I liked it a lot....And the people treated me well.”

Those that found gainful employment appreciated the economic opportunities the country provided. Unlike several U.S. nationals, they did not compare their wages to native U.S. citizens, but to the earnings to which they were accustomed in El Salvador. The relative wages were substantially higher than most of them could imagine earning in El Salvador. Pacco Torres, 28, appreciated that he could attain what he considered a well-paying job with little English and without a university degree. He said, “it is the jobs...there are more opportunities there than here. Because we could say that there they would not be asking if you have a university degree. All they say is whether you can speak some English and then let’s work!” Carlos Gutiérrez, 42, also expressed a common claim. He said “It’s a nice place. It’s got all the opportunities...I used to learn all the stuff. I learned the mechanic—the construction world. I learned everything and I

was well paid. When other people were making five or six dollars, I was making ten or fifteen dollars, you know, because I used to work as an electrician.”

Employment in the U.S. permitted some Salvadoran nationals to send money back to their families in El Salvador. It also permitted them to purchase commodities most might otherwise never attain. The rapidity with which they could purchase desired goods contributed desires to extend their stays abroad. Such was the case for Miguel Castillo, 38. Miguel originally planned to only stay in the U.S. a few years, but he gradually became accustomed to the U.S. standard of living. He said, “So, my first few years up in the United States, I don’t—I remember that I always, every single day, wanted to come back down here, you know. When three years passed, I started thinking that I don’t want to come back to El Salvador...I said to myself, you know, in my mind, I don’t want to go down there because over there you have to work very hard all day long for probably three dollars a day....So I said to myself, you know, no I don’t want to go back. I don’t want to go back. I already got my cars, you know. I got my first car when I—the year before I got my driver’s license...So, I started thinking by myself, you know, so I better stay here and help my people, you know, with more money.”

Though they appreciated the economic benefits and often the culture and people of the U.S., most Salvadoran nationals never attained a sense of belonging while abroad. Though many tried to establish “home-like” conditions in the U.S., they reported low levels of psychocultural and social network embeddedness. Carlos Gutiérrez was particularly descriptive about his sense of alienation in U.S. society. He had migrated at the age of 18 and spent a total of nine years in the U.S. Though he worked as an electrician and garnered what he considered good wages, the U.S. could not compare to the comfort he felt in his “home” of El Salvador. He explained:

“I mean, it’s a nice place....but it’s not for me...I was in that States, but I didn’t feel at home. You know what I mean? I always thought of coming back here [to El Salvador]. Always, always, always. I mean, I like the States alright. Than they have some great opportunities and all that stuff, but my heart was here. I never forgot that I am a Salvadoran. And, one day, I am going to go back to my home....I was in the States, but I knew it wasn’t my country.”

Low levels of economic embeddedness in the U.S. was a result the affective and social ties they maintained to El Salvador and the uncertainty they faced entering a new culture as adults well socialized in the ways of their native society. As Sergio Portillo, 28, explained, “we feel sad because we must leave the family is left behind when leaving the country. To leave your own [country] to another country that you don’t know....or to know different people.” Carlos rejoined, “You know, it’s hard for us to just one day leave our country, leave all that we are being used to, you know. Even our language. The way we talk, the way we move, you know the way we are! Our families, it’s real hard to leave my mother, my father.”

Many Salvadoran nationals also reported feeling alienated in the U.S. society, in part because of their lack of familiarity and social ties in the U.S., but also because of racism and discrimination they encountered as Latin American migrants in the U.S. Rolando Pineda, 21, stated quite plainly “I didn’t like it there.” He confessed that the economic standard of living in the U.S. was “pretty good” compared to El Salvador. Because he could speak some English, Rolando reported making higher income than his colleagues who spoke only Spanish. He was pleased that he could support his family in El Salvador. Still, he lived with an aunt he barely knew while in the U.S. and he “didn’t have any” other meaningful family or friendship ties in the country. Because he often felt isolated and “all alone,” he voluntarily returned to El Salvador to spend time with his family, whom he missed greatly. Rolando eventually returned to the U.S., but he encountered racism during his second visit. When asked to describe Americans he said, “Some of them were like racist people.” Rolando reported no problems with Whites, but he came in more frequent contact with Blacks, with whom he used to “get in fights with and all that.”

Many Salvadoran nationals also discussed the challenges of living in the U.S. without lawful status. Rolando stated that “I didn’t have papers. I used to be careful because police know that. I didn’t even drink, you know, just not to have problems.” Like Rolando, unauthorized Salvadoran nationals, especially those who were living in the U.S. during the rise of the immigration restrictions of the 1990s and 2000s, carefully monitored their activities to prevent apprehension by police or immigration officials. Though many had their own modes of transportation, they tried to move as efficiently as possible between their residences and their places of employment. Some people were immobilized by their legal status to an even greater degree, however. For example, Juan Orellana, 29, didn’t send money to his family in El Salvador for four months because a man he described as “a Dominican” told him banks share their clients’ lack of legal status with immigration authorities. Juan dutifully saved his paychecks from work. After he established a trustworthy friendship with someone authorized to be in the U.S., he asked his friend to remit on his behalf. Juan explained that “after four months I was able to send money back through one of my friends. I didn’t know how to put the money because it was my first time. And I felt afraid to put money in an agency because they might catch me.”

Ambivalent Returns

Like their experiences in the U.S., Salvadoran nationals regarded their returns to El Salvador with ambivalence. They nearly unanimously reported longings to return to El Salvador while in the U.S. They all had maintained transnational ties while abroad, especially through telephone calls, emails, social media, and remittances. Yet they still often deeply missed their family, friends, the food, the language, the culture, and the sights of El Salvador. As Carlos Gutiérrez shared, “I missed *pupusas!* [laughter]. Family, friends, you know. It’s hard for us to

just one day leave our country, leave all of that we are being used to, you know. Even our language. The way we talk, the way we move, you know, the way we are! Our families, it's real hard to leave my mother, my father. Even I have a family over there in the States, but I missed them a lot. And the *pupusas* also! Because of their longings to return and sometimes the negative experiences they had in the U.S., deportation was partially viewed positively. It represented an opportunity to be reunited with the people and comforts of their perceived "homeland." It permitted them to return to a place where they believed they would not be discriminated against on the basis of racialized identities or legal status. As Carlos explained when he described looking forward to being returned to El Salvador he said that in his country of origin, "I don't have to be looking all behind my back for authorities or immigration. At home. I feel at home here. This is what I am trying to tell you. I feel at home."

Unlike their U.S. national counterparts, Salvadoran nationals generally understood the context to which they would return. Since the majority of this population spent their formative years in El Salvador and maintained transnational social support networks while abroad, they were not concerned about where or with whom they would live. Despite this security, most Salvadoran nationals were troubled by the fact that their migratory journeys were cut short. As Roberto Valdez, 26, said, "you don't want to be coming back how I came." Deportees like Roberto felt ashamed or embarrassed that they were unable to achieve their migratory goals, especially providing much-needed remittances to their families. Many were acutely aware of the stigma many deportees occupy in the Salvadoran imagination; the idea that deportees come to take the jobs of locals or to engage in criminal activities. They expressed concern that their reputations would be tarnished by deportation; that they would be perceived as "failed migrants" by their families and in their communities. Roberto, 26, expressed a common emotion, "I wasn't

feeling quite right because you don't want to be coming back how I came. I was ashamed. I wanted to help the family, but I couldn't. I was afraid they were disappointed in me.”

A final set of concerns existed for Salvadoran nationals who spent longer periods of time in the U.S. Several Salvadoran nationals were aware that their migratory journeys and time in the U.S. had changed them. The passage of time likely brought about changes in their social networks back “at home.” Jesus Lopez, 27, emigrated at the age of 18 and spent seven years abroad. Commenting on his thoughts in immigration detention, he said, “I didn’t know [specifics], but I knew things had changed. I knew it was going to be a lot of difference. I knew it. But then I also knew I had to make it.” Another person concerned about changes was Miguel Castillo, 38. Miguel traveled to the U.S. at the age of 20. He separated from his family to financially support his wife, his four-year-old child, and another child still in the womb. Miguel spent a total of eleven years abroad. While there, he heard through the transnational rumor mill that his wife entered into a committed partnership with another man. When he was in immigration detention after a series of drunken driving offenses and a prison term, his mother died. When Miguel heard of her passing he became seriously depressed. He said,

“Time had passed and my wife had got with another guy...and my mom died when I was in jail. So I started thinking about it. Probably, I said, by myself, that, probably things have changed down there. So I started thinking and thinking every day...And I remember when I got here at the first days, I didn’t go out from my house. I stayed in there because people I knew that when I left, they were kids. When I came back they already went—I didn’t know them. So, what I am trying to say is that when I came back I saw things differently, you know, everything. Probably it was just eleven years, but things changed through time.”

Societal Reception

Salvadoran nationals far and away described their arrival in El Salvador as a “homecoming,” at least relative to U.S. nationals. Sometimes the date of their arrival in El Salvador was known to their families and sometimes it was as surprise. Still, when they first arrived at the airport or returned to their villages, nearly all of them were embraced by their

families. One such case was Josué Alvarado, 18. Josué went to the U.S. at age 18 and was immediately apprehended upon entry to the U.S. He was interviewed shortly after his arrival back “home.” When asked about the reception he received at the airport with his family and in his village, he proclaimed:

In the airport only my mom arrived, my aunts, and two friends. They received me well. My mom cried because it had been so long since she saw me. “Mami,” I said to her, “Why are you crying? I came well, nothing happened to me!” Then, after that, I went to embrace my family... Then all of my friends, those that I got along with, they all came to my house to welcome me... They received me well. They came to my house to welcome me. They told me that I came fat! They had never seen me so fat. It’s because over there [in immigration detention] they give good food to you. You don’t suffer. So [my family] said, “you didn’t suffer, did you!” “No, if anything, [detention] felt like home to me,” I said. Watching TV, I told them. Sleeping, I told them. Joking around, playing, everything, I said. Nothing was missing.

In reality, Josué experienced a very hard journey to the U.S. and in immigration detention. He was apprehended multiple times in Mexico, had a gun placed to his head by robbers, and was treated poorly by guards and fellow detainees in immigration detention. His journey was narrated as a great trauma. Josué preferred, however, to protect his loved ones from the reality of his journey, at least initially. This was a subtle homemaking strategy (controlling information) he employed to allow him to revel in the warm welcome his family and friends offered him.

Like Josué, most of the Salvadoran nationals experience a psychological tension composed of happiness to return to their families and friends, shame that they were unable to continue to support their families financially, and fear that they would be perceived as failed migrants. Roberto Valdez, 26, shared what he felt the day of his deportation, “All of my family was happy. All of them was happy. But, I wasn’t feeling quite right because you don’t want to be coming back how I came. I was ashamed. They all knew my case. I wanted to help the family, but I couldn’t. I was afraid they were disappointed in me.” Persons with such feelings commonly reported that they attempted to control information about their deportation status. Many preferred

that only their closest relatives and friends know the truth behind their migration and deportation stories. As Paco, 28, explained, “They are so embarrassed and ashamed to be telling their stories to other people who didn't get deported, or to people that they just met, you know? They can talk so dirty about who they are, and what they are, to themselves, you know. But they don't go speaking to anyone outside of their own minds.”

The transnational rumor mill made locals, particularly in small villages where news travels quickly, partially aware of Salvadoran nationals' behavior while in the U.S., but some deportees still felt the need to clarify that they did not commit crimes. If they could successfully perform such a narrative, their reputations were saved. In one instance, the mother of Juan Orellana, 29, was concerned he had been involved in delinquent behavior in the U.S. To calm his mother's fears, Juan explained he was deported after a workplace raid, not a criminal act. After he explained the reality, she stopped questioning him about his criminality and became more concerned about the “injustices” he encountered on en route to the U.S. and in detention. When asked about his overall process of “going home,” Juan downplayed the initial questioning from his mother and chose instead to highlight that “it was emotional. I felt like they still loved me.”

Roberto Valdez, 26, represents another case in which his status in the U.S. was challenged. Roberto was different from Juan and most other Salvadoran nationals in that he committed a violent crime in the U.S. He reported no history of gang involvement in either country, but he was convicted of criminal trespassing and child molestation. Juan also had visible tattoos that he obtained during his six years in the U.S. Like other Salvadoran nationals he returned to his rural village ashamed. “They all knew my case,” he said, but “my mom was only concerned about my tattoos. She told me if I had a tattoo she would take my skin off just because she doesn't like tattoos.” Roberto did not discuss specific tactics he employed to elevate his

tarnished social status in his community, but in his interview he utilized some strategies that are illustrative.

First, Roberto further explained, or downplayed, his criminal charges by stating “do not think that I was doing something against a two-year old girl. She was 16 years old.” He also worked to distance himself from gang members by dissociating his tattoos with those of gang members. He said, “I didn’t have those kind of tattoos.” He also distanced himself from deportees who were perceived as arrogant and thus annoying. He explained, “They all think that I was coming like the rest of the deportees, like feeling superior because they had seen the States. I wasn’t coming like that...they all think that the United States is glorious...They all think that they found money on the streets. But that is not true. You have to work very hard for your money. They lie about it. I have listened to many of them speak about the United States. But I have been there, and I know that you can suffer as well. You have to work very hard for your money but you are also marginalized as well...I think they, I don’t know, like the attention.” It is unclear the degree to which Roberto employed these tactics in real life and, if he did, the degree to which they played a role in his adaptation. But, it is clear that over time has grown to feel like El Salvador is “home.” He explains:

It’s like time didn’t pass, all the years that I was out of El Salvador. It feels like I am the same person that I was before I left. But the children who were small when I left, they are taller now. The same people are working with my family now...I feel like I need to keep working here. Many say that the United States is fate, but I want to do it here to stay with my family.

A final person who experienced problems with his reputation upon return was Armando Flores, 22. Armando reported that there was gossip in his small village about the reasons for his removal. He said that “at the beginning in this small place everyone knows everything from the day I had to leave until the say I came back.” Sometimes he would walk around the village and he would notice people abruptly stop what sounded like gossip about his status whenever he

would pass by. He said, “the problem was not what they were saying, that is simply the way people are here. I am accustomed to it. I was born here. It has always been like this and one knows it. But what feels uncomfortable is to arrive at a place and there could be a group chatting and as soon as I join, they stop chatting.” When probed about the chatter he said the townspeople gossiped that he “came arrogant.” Though he was never involved in gangs in the U.S. he had also heard he and the other deportees were trouble-makers, or “people who went bad.” To avoid dealing with the townspeople, Armando monitored his mobility. He had become accustomed to immigration detention so he continued to detain himself in his house after his removal. He was reportedly “happy in the house and going out to the hammock.” Like Roberto, Armando found that the locals gave up on their gossiping. When asked about his overall societal reception he ultimately expressed, ‘everyone was so happy because I wasn't injured and happy because they said that God brought me back safe.’

Cases in which minimization of potential or actual stigmatization was claimed to be necessary were minimal among Salvadoran deportees. Those that existed were apparently resolved through the deployment of various coping, homemaking, and rhetorical distancing strategies. The vast majority of Salvadoran nationals, however, reported that they were not treated any differently than non-deportees. They were not visually or audibly identifiable from the rest of the general population. Those that did not spend enough time in the United States to adopt a different accent or incorporate American customs were not treated any differently than the local population by the public, police, or gang members. Moreover, because they did not carry physical or auditory markers that outwardly made them targets for incarceration or gang violence, family, friends, and community members tended to overlook or quickly disregard their deportation status. They vast majority were viewed not as gangsters but as “unlucky” migrants.

Sergio, 24, stated, “the society, it just treats us the same as everyone else. Even if they know we came deported, they just see us as people who were unlucky, that’s it....They only tell me that I had bad luck.” Thus, far from a hyper-stigmatized population Salvadoran nationals in this sample were, in many cases, a population viewed with sympathy.

Economic Embeddedness

For Salvadoran nationals, the economic climate in El Salvador presented their greatest challenge post-deportation. Some individuals were able to craft a sustainable living upon return, like Juan Ayala, introduced in Chapter 5. Juan had stayed in the U.S. long enough to save money to start his own taxi business in El Salvador. Most Salvadorans, however, returned to a similar or worse economic situation than they lived prior to their migration to the U.S. Some had taken out loans against their assets to cover the cost of the journey, which, according to the director of a Salvadoran migrant advocacy agency, costs between US \$8,000 to \$11,000 with the assistance of a smuggler. Because many Salvadoran nationals did not spend enough time in the United States to earn surplus income to cover their debts, the economic reality in which they encountered in El Salvador was dismal. It is for this reason that Salvadoran nationals consistently and emphatically expressed the imperativeness of finding employment immediately upon arrival. Javier, 43, reported a typical story:

Before I left to the United States, I had a job here. As I say, I was working here on a farm. But, I had to leave the job when I went on the journey north to help support my family. And then when I came back to here, I had to look for a new job because I left the old one behind and because I owed money to the coyote. I was worried about getting a job. I thought it would be hard to find. But, I knew I had to do it. If I wasn’t going to make it to the United States, I had to try to make it here, you know, for my family.

Despite their desires, high rates of unemployment initially made it difficult for adult migrant deportees to find jobs in El Salvador. If they were not in the U.S. long enough for their

Salvadoran-based social support network to dissolve, their local family and friends usually provided assistance in locating jobs. This strategy was effective. After an initial period of unemployment, the vast majority secured some form of employment. Miguel, 38, expressed how, after eight months of unemployment, he used his social support network to locate a job:

I was really concerned about finding a new job. When I returned, I did not work for eight months because I couldn't find anything. Then, I started talking to my friend; and he is a painter. So, I talked with him about it with his supervisor of the company for painting, residential painting. So, [the supervisor] gave me a job. And [my friend], he is a Christian. He is a pretty nice guy. He always was. When we were little boys, we were raised together. We went through the whole of school together. So, he helped me out a lot. He gave me a job.

Though they often had the advantage of a support network to assist in locating employment, Salvadoran nationals usually only found employment in low-paying working-class positions. When they returned to El Salvador, did so with the same level of human capital they had prior to their departure. They had low levels of education, virtually no computer skills, and low English abilities. As a result, they could only secure employment in local restaurants, small stores, farms, bricklaying, and construction. These positions paid an average of \$8 per day. As is expected, the deportees consistently argued that this salary was insufficient to support their families and pay off migratory debt. The case of Enrique Macias, 25, is illustrative. Enrique made five unsuccessful attempts to enter the U.S. to support his family. Though he was able to easily locate employment, such work could not guarantee a sustainable livelihood for him and his family. As such, he described his post-deportation economic situation as “critical.”

Things for me, they are exactly the same as when I left. I knew that when I was deported, I would come back and I would help my family by making bricks. I would probably live with my mom. I have always lived there. And it was the same. I got the same job back at the same company because the boss liked my work. I make the same money. I make \$40 each week. It is all the same. But, the problem is that there are eight people living in my house. My dad, he is too old and cannot work. My mom can't work either. And I have five siblings. The girls, they are too young. And my brothers, they earn the same as me. So, together we make like \$120 each week, for eight people. It is very hard. And it is *hard work* too. I am not happy. I face a critical financial situation and I don't know what I can do anymore.

The economic outcomes of Salvadoran nationals are structured by the economic context of return in El Salvador, which includes the downfall of local agriculture, the dollarization of the Salvadoran economy, the rise of free trade zones sponsored by foreign investment, and insufficient government-mandated minimum wages. Most of the Salvadoran nationals were old enough to remember the change in the economy after El Salvador adopted the U.S. dollar as its own in 2001. It was a common theme in their post-deportation narratives. Discourse had clearly traveled through their communities and they experienced first-hand about how an average laborer could purchase much more food under the colón. An exchange between participants in a focus group conducted by Susan Coutin in 2008 highlights the way in which the population understood the impact of dollarization—and, perhaps implicitly, the decline of the agricultural sector more generally in the neoliberal area—on their post-deportation economic outcomes:

- Miguel Rivera: “I think the hardest part is the money, you know, the economy. We ain’t make enough money down here in El Salvador...we are used to a different life; a better life, with good money. I think that is the hardest part.”
- Sergio Portillo: For us, for me it was difficult to return to the country. And over there, with the change for the money, you know? Because before it was, it was the—
- Miguel Rivera: Colón.
- Sergio Portillo: Colón. It was another currency and for the work that you did—and now no. Now the economy is screwed. By changing the money they reduced the whole country. Because before things were cheaper. And now [we have] the same prices as over there in the U.S. You go to the market and you pay the same price!
- Susan Coutin: I noted this also. It’s incredible.
- Sergio Portillo: It’s incredible! And here they pay you—they pay you four dollars and you work in the fields. The most you earn is five or seven dollars in the fields, máximo, over twenty-four hours; from six in the morning until two in the afternoon. They pay five or seven dollars...
- Miguel Rivera: Working like a donkey.

This economic context of return in El Salvador puts Salvadoran nationals, like U.S. nationals and much of the domestic population, in a precarious economic position. The following exchange between Luis Aguilar and Giovanni Bonilla in 2008 is telling:

Luis Aguilar: You see, the American Dollar was going to come here and it was supposed to benefit the people. It is not benefiting *nobody*.

Giovanni Bonilla: People say they would rather have the colón back. They would rather have their own money.

Luis Aguilar: You know I talk with my friends from school and that's the same topic we always talk about. Because you figure that American money came here, it was going to be a lot better.

Katie Dingeman-Cerda: Why did they think it would be better? To facilitate trade?

Giovanni Bonilla: It was just, that is what I am telling you, that is politics. That's ARENA. It was going to be better for the big companies that run a lot of money, ya know what I am sayin'. They have to do deposits. They probably have to deposit some money, but they have to go through all that colón and trade it for dollars and all that. They did it all for the rich people. ARENA has always been like that. They look after the rich and they step on the poor people (stomps feet).

Luis Aguilar: Yes, you figure, I mean, like I said, most companies that I have worked in [in the U.S.], I made \$8 or better an hour. And here, I went to work over there in Usulután and I worked in agriculture, farming. And they paid me \$4 a day! When I used to work off the book for hours [in the U.S.], at least I made \$80 off the books.

Giovanni Bonilla: Ok, check this out. You make like the minimum wage here. It's like \$5.40 a day! But, you gotta go and get on the bus. The bus costs you maybe—I don't know how far is your job, but if you gotta spend \$2 a day on bus. And your food, how much? You add the food which costs you \$1.50. How much is that? That is \$3.50 and you are making \$5.40 a day. And you got family at home. You gotta pay the rent. The light bill. The phone bill. How the hell you gonna survive on \$170 a month? Tell me! Like I tell you, only the rich are the ones getting the benefits of the dollar.

Katie Dingeman-Cerda: It was better before?

Giovanni Bonilla: Yea a lot of people say that. 100 colons would last—if you know how to manage your money—you could buy food. Like I told you, how much is beans? A pound of beans? \$1.10! Everything is expensive. The rice is like \$0.65. And gas! If you are making only \$5.40 a day. If you want a car, you've gotta be making more money.

Deported persons are left with few sustainable options. Salvadoran nationals might: 1) pursue adult education to increase levels of human capital, 2) enter the illicit labor market

through involvement in criminal activity (likely vis-à-vis local gangs), or 3) attempt re-migration to the U.S. Adult education emerged as an impossible option for the vast majority of adult migrant deportees. While a government-sponsored free adult education program was implemented, Salvadoran nationals reported that it had yet to reach the rural regions in which most of them lived. Regardless, most reported that they would not consider returning to school even if the program was available. It was necessary that they work to provide for the basic needs—food, housing, clothing, transportation, and utility expenses—of their families.

It is conceivable that Salvadoran nationals would join gangs to survive. After all, as Luis Aguilar, a U.S. national, said, “If you can’t find a job, you might as well get a gun.” But the Salvadoran nationals almost unanimously expressed that criminal activity was not a reasonable option for them. Alfonso Rivas, 21, introduced at the beginning of the chapter, illustrates this best. Alfonso entertained dreams of entering the U.S., working, finishing school, attending law school, and returning to El Salvador to advocate for poor Salvadorans as a “human rights attorney.” After Alfonso was deported he was unable to re-enter secondary school because he missed the deadline for enrollment. He had to wait almost a year to re-enroll in classes so he tried to find a job, but struggled. When asked if he ever had problems with gang members or considered entering a gang to resolve his financial situation, he responded like most Salvadoran nationals that gang involvement is a problem plaguing U.S. nationals; not them. Alfonso said:

No, I haven’t had problems with gangsters and I won’t ever be involved with them. The gangs, they really are not our problem. The ones who go to the United States and stay there for a long time, they are the ones who join gangs. Those deportees are the gang members, not us. We just want to go and work and support our families. And when we get back, we avoid the gangs. And they don’t bother us except to probably take some little money on the bus.

With adult education and gang membership undesirable solutions to economic deprivation, most Salvadoran nationals reported they were considering re-migrating to the U.S. Past research has reported that as much as 40% of Salvadoran deportees attempt to re-migrate to

the United States (Hagan et al. 2008). However, adult migrant deportees interviewed in 2008 reported that 75% to 90% of deportees immediately attempted a remigration. This number significantly dropped in later interviews, explained largely by the dangers of traveling through Mexico, but the majority of deportees still reported that they would not rule out a future return migration if necessary. The next section considers the factors they consider in their re-migration decision-making.

Considering Return Migration

The disjuncture between Salvadoran nationals' high levels of psychocultural and social network embeddedness and their post-deportation economic precariousness makes re-emigration a potential, but painful, option for most U.S. nationals. The vast majority of the population reported that they had considered the possibility of trying to enter the U.S. again. The main reason they cited supporting desires to leave was absolute economic deprivation. In many cases, Salvadoran nationals literally saw no other way for their families to survive. In such cases, the financial gains they could potentially earn in the U.S. were generally worth the risk of a dangerous, clandestine, and formally banned remigration to the United States. Family separation was undesirable, but was seen as a necessary sacrifice (see also Abrego 2014). The case of Jesus Mejía, 22, reflected this situation. Jesus grew up in a rural village dependent upon the land. He migrated to the U.S. at 21 years old and was placed in removal proceedings immediately after crossing the border. Though he opted for a "return" and did not receive a formal ban on re-entry, he returned to his family with no additional economic resources to show for his migratory efforts. The only option he saw for their survival was another emigration. He explained:

It is impossible for us to survive like this, you know, working on the farm. I worry for my wife and my coming baby. I want to give them a better life, you know? But what can I do? The government of the United States doesn't want me there, but we can't survive here. It's not enough,

you know, money. Someday, I think I will have to try [to migrate to the United States] again. I did it before, and, prayers to God, I can do it again. I cannot see another way.

Other Salvadoran nationals contemplated return to the U.S. out of affective longing and comparative economic deprivation. After spending some time abroad, they grew to appreciate life in the U.S. They were also to see the dramatic degree of inequality between their sending and receiving countries. They could attain certain commodities that they could never feasibly garner in El Salvador. They longed to return to the place where the fruits of their labor resulted in desired commodities and promised upward mobility from the lives they lived in El Salvador.

One good example of this kind of longing is represented by Armando Flores, 22. Armando migrated at 15 years old to study in the U.S. He spent 3 years there before he was caught driving without a license and was placed in removal proceedings in 2007. Since he has been back his mother who remained abroad sent him remittances to survive financially in El Salvador. Though he could subsist in El Salvador and he loved El Salvador, he remained emotionally connected to the U.S. He recounted that when he was in the U.S. he missed “everything [about El Salvador], the streets, my family, my bed. I had my bed beside a window and I like that.” But, he said, “it is really ironic. Now that I am here in my bed I don’t like it. I miss it there. I miss the window that I had in that bedroom and I miss the yard of the house where I lived. That is very ironic.”

One of the things Armando missed the most about the U.S. was the relative freedom to consume. Armando did not attain a well-paying job in the U.S. He worked in yard maintenance. Still, he saved his extra earnings and was able to purchase some goods he considered valuable. One such item was his smart phone. This was a prized good he still retained after removal. It contained songs and music he downloaded in the U.S. Though friends encouraged him to delete the music, he enjoyed listening to them to remember the three years he spent abroad. Armando

explained, “I was able to bring some of my things [from the U.S.] with me and for that I am thankful. It was something curious. I had my cellular phone there...and until now I still carry that cellular. And still on that cellular I have ten sons that I listed to there and I don’t want to put any more. And the photos that I had from there, those I still have. Everyone tells me to put new music on your phone. And now the cellular is failing me from all of the years. But here I have it.” For Armando, the phone represented his memories of the U.S.; something that was his that he did not want to lose or tarnish. He said lovingly about his phone and implicitly his time in the U.S., “for me, that is mine, very much mine. And here I have it. Together with my things. Mine.”

Armando dreamed of returning to the U.S. Like many others his ideal scenario was to live a transnational life in which he could move back and forth between the U.S. and El Salvador at his leisure. He feared being detained and removed again, however. He also feared the journey through Mexico, which most Salvadoran nationals described as the main factor preventing their return to the U.S. Though several Salvadoran nationals did attempt and succeed at returning to the U.S., the cost of the journey with a coyote and the almost certain violence they would experience along the route was seen by most persons in this sample as too much of a risk. This was especially the case in the latter phases of the research when violence through Mexico arguably increased for Central American migrants. These factors combined led persons such as Armando to state that they wanted to return, but only if they could do so legally. In other words, guaranteed legal status in the U.S. would make such a dangerous journey worthwhile.

There was a subset of individuals who were not interested in returning to the U.S. Such persons certainly recognized the economic benefits of life in the U.S. but they ultimately placed greater value on the sense of psychocultural belonging and social network embeddedness they attained in El Salvador after removal. Miguel Castillo said, for example, “Sometimes I say I

would be in the United States. Like every Friday at 5 o'clock afternoon or work! You know, when I cash my check! Sometimes. But most of the times, I don't care to go back. I feel accepted here." Though it was a struggle, persons like Miguel had made peace with their position in the multiple socioeconomic and political hierarchies in which they were embedded. They started new families from whom they did not want to separate and accepted low wage labor and lower standards of living. As Carlos Gutiérrez, 42, explained:

A lot of people who came with me, you know, we were talking on the plane, like "eh, what you gonna do, bro?" "Ah, I'm just gonna come back man, what about you?" And I told 'em that I am not coming back; I am going to stay. "No, you won't man. You won't." I say, "yea, I am going to stay and do a life."... There wasn't time for me to be crying or looking back. I just had to go ahead. I had a responsibility. I had a wife. I had a daughter. I had to pay the rent. I had to be with them... I think that whatever you want, you have to pay a price. You know you have to have your priorities straight. And a lot of people left their families and go to the States to make money. But they lose their families! It's about priorities, your values. If you want to be with your family, your kids. So, I am happy here.

Several Salvadoran national found respite—or a supreme sense of “home”—in their faith in God. They resigned to struggle against the social constraints of their lives. And they narrated their decisions to settle in El Salvador as part of God's fated plan for their lives. This was expressed best by Carlos, a Salvadoran national who struggled with gang membership in the U.S. and alcoholism in El Salvador. After deportation and fighting through the worst of his alcoholism, he refuge in his local Pentecostal Church and eventually went through seminary trainings to become a pastor. At the end of his interview he was asked about his goals for his life, he proclaimed:

Carlos Gutiérrez: Right now, the main thing that I want to try to be straight, you know. You know walking on the God's way. And, really I think when 5 years, you know, really I guess to be a good Christian. You know to be good for everybody. To people that used to see me bad, so they can see me different. They can think different about me. You know, be good, good, good for God first. Then to the people, you know.

Katie Dingeman-Cerda: And in the far future, say 10 to 20 years?

- Carlos Gutiérrez: By then, maybe be a grandfather! I will see my daughter and son graduate from the university. And work hard for it. I mean, pay the price. I paid the price for the bad things. You know, I spent a lot of time in prison. I paid. So, now I am going to pay the price for good things.
- Katie Dingeman-Cerda: Good for you.
- Carlos Gutiérrez: Leading. Write that! Leading a church. Founding and leading a church. Helping other people, mainly.
- Katie Dingeman-Cerda: I am going to have to come back someday to see your church!
- Carlos Gutiérrez: Yeah, and I will have bilingual services. English and Spanish.

***Hermanos Lejanos* as Neoliberal Subjects**

To the casual observer persons like Carlos Gutiérrez and the other Salvadoran nationals interviewed for this project may not fully represent the *hermanos lejanos* depicted in El Salvador's national imaginary. Deported before they completed their migratory objectives the state and their families hoped for them, they typically return with little to nothing to show for their time abroad, at least monetarily. They could very well be defined as "failed migrants" instead of saviors of the post-war neoliberal economy, if the only factor in evaluating their status is their financial contribution. But the post-deportation narratives of this population tell a much more complicated story.

After some initial discursive maneuvering Salvadoran nationals can usually distance themselves from the damning stigma of criminality often assigned to deportees who spent time in the U.S. They are often warmly welcomed home by their families, friends, and community members, but they face a hostile economic context of return. They find themselves torn between the sense of psychocultural and social network belonging they achieved in El Salvador and the lure of economic prospects in the U.S. Some persons vow to risk life, limb, and liberty to return clandestinely to the U.S. to save their families and themselves from economic deprivation. Others, however, choose to accept their social positions in El Salvador, meager as they may be,

and focus on building united families and cultivating their religious faith and practices. Regardless of whether they stay in El Salvador or they continue to engage in the migratory cycle, Salvadoran nationals take on the risk and uncertainty of the market, maneuvering and settling in ways that will maximize their income and their happiness in life more generally. In these ways they represent ideal subjects of the neoliberal world order. Though their “failure” might deceive, Salvadoran nationals are very much the type of citizen the Salvadoran state has worked to cultivate in the post-war era. They are *hermanos lejanos* come “home.”

CHAPTER 7

Strangers in a Native Land

‘I am an immigrant in my own country.’

- Ramiro Díaz

‘We are accustomed to the life there. We passed a lot of time, almost all of our childhood, our adolescence, there. And, look, (we are) here without having our families here. So it is insecure. And then to be here and no one helps you. They give you the hand and say, “you cannot work here.” But one has to find a way to adapt, little by little.’

- Miguel Rivera, 37

This chapter introduces U.S. Nationals. This is a population that largely migrated to the US at a young age and grew up there. They view removal as betrayal, exile, and banishment from the homes they constructed in the U.S. It argues that they do not view El Salvador as their home or view themselves as native Salvadorans. I draw upon Goffman to argue that in El Salvador they maintain a spoiled identity and work on racial formation to argue that they are becoming a de facto ethnic minority, identifiable by their visibility and auditory differences from “authentic natives.” Most are treated as if they are gang members, even if they do not have such a history. This label follows them in their “daily rounds,” constricting their ability to overcome its coercive power. This does not mean that they do not negotiate their current reality. They employ Du Bois’ notion of “double consciousness,” much like Blacks in the U.S. Other “homemaking strategies” include changing their attire, removing their tattoos, monitoring their mobility, establishing local romantic ties, and finding employment in industries catering to other foreigners, such as call centers and hotels. I ultimately argue that it is not impossible for them to build a home in El Salvador, but their existence is precarious.

Forgetting, Remembering, and Emigrating

Many U.S. nationals were young when they emigrated from El Salvador and, as such, they retained few, if any, memories of their country-of-origin. Armando Robles, 29, exemplified such a case. Armando was transferred to the U.S. by his parents in 1990 when he was only 18 months old. His entire extended family left El Salvador, but no one ever explained to him what motivated their emigration. He said “we didn’t really discuss that issue...we just left. My whole family left so mom’s like “we gotta go.” So that’s it. That’s all I remember.” As Armando grew up, his family watched news in Spanish, so he gained knowledge of El Salvador through media discourse, but his family did not reminisce and he never demonstrated interest in learning about the country. When further probed if he had any memories or knowledge of El Salvador, he reported “Naw, like I said I was like one and a half when I left so basically I grew up over there (in the U.S.). I thought that was my home we were all just going to school and that’s it. I never came back over here (to El Salvador).”

A similar phenomenon occurred with Diego Aguilar, 28. Diego was a large, muscular man who arrived to his interview in a baseball cap and long-sleeved grey t-shirt that read “Beverly Hills Polo.” He first migrated to the U.S. at the age of 7, grew up in New York, and considered himself an “American.” It never occurred to him some could regard him as belonging in El Salvador because he always considered the U.S. his natural home. He spent a total of 17 years in the U.S. before he was deported at the age of 24. All other participants spoke in Spanish during his focus group interview in 2008, but Diego preferred to respond in English. When asked what he missed from the U.S., he enthusiastically shared his love of fast food “bacon, egg, and cheese” sandwiches. He also reminisced with great clarity about his life growing up in the U.S., but he was incapable of recalling any memories prior to migration. He explained that “I left

when I was seven years old. You know, I really can't remember anything about (El Salvador). All I can remember is since I got to (the U.S.) "till the day I got deported."

Unlike Armando and Diego, who migrated quite young, U.S. nationals who left for the U.S. during late adolescence or later were able to recall fond moments of their childhoods in El Salvador. A few interviewees were able to narrate memories, of holidays and special occasions with their families and in their communities. Victor Figueroa, 28, remembered attending the carnival in San Salvador prior to his migration to Los Angeles in 1980. He said "It's like Disneyland. But the only thing is that, I mean, there ain't ground; it's dirt, you know what I mean? But the rides, they're all brand new and there's a lot of typical food. There's bars, there's *discomobiles*, there's people dancing, then the big "o fairground where all the rides are at. It's pretty cool. It only comes once a year it celebrates our Salvador festival." Christmas was also a highlight, just as it is for many children in the Western world. Miguel Rivera, 37, explained that "it's a belief of all Salvadorans; we believe in Santa Claus. Supposedly, he will come at night to leave gifts. Everyone is waiting for his arrival. It could be two in the night when we would open gifts to see what he gave you."

Christmas and the carnival were special times in El Salvador; happy moments worthy of energetic explication. For most U.S. nationals, however, the childhood memories they purportedly maintained were narrated rather vaguely. They recalled attending school, playing with friends, kicking around soccer balls, and spending time with family members. Most of them described those memories through brief comments like those of Ricardo Delgado, 38, who said, "I used to go play around and everything, go out with my friends, and go to school. It was normal. I mean, it was pretty good." Another example is Antonio Portillo, 35, who remembered spending time with his grandmother. "It was good, because I had my grandmother. I remember

my grandmother and my grandfather. They used to care for us when my mom (went) to work. And, I remember, I do remember she used to take us to the park, play soccer, and stuff. Yea, that's about it." Perhaps because they were aware that the purpose of their interviews was to discuss immigration and deportation, interviewees like Antonio quickly transitioned from discussing their childhood to addressing the factors that initiated their emigration. For some U.S. nationals, it was family separation, but for most it was the civil war and its economic effects.

Family Separation

A trauma sometimes remembered by young U.S. nationals was the painful separation they endured from their family members who traveled to the U.S. in advance of them. This was reported by interviewees regardless of their own motivations of migration. In chapter 5, we were introduced to Ernie Martínez, a U.S. national who grew up believing his grandparents were his parents. After Ernie's grandmother died of cancer, he found a picture of his mother, who was living in the U.S. On the back of a photo his mother had written, "Hugs to my son, (Ernie)" and "Tell him that I love him." When he learned his family had been lying to him about his mother he felt a profound sense of betrayal. Finding the photo was a major turning point in his life. He not only lost his grandmother, but was deeply saddened that he never got to know his mom. It was a moment that he argued led him to try marijuana, which was, for him, a gateway into more serious drug abuse and an eventual migration to the U.S., where he hoped to find his mother.

Ricardo Delgado, 38, also remembered living with his grandmother and his uncles in El Salvador as a child. His mother left because "she wanted a better life for us" but he was unable to reconcile the way she decided to leave him. "She just left us over here and she didn't even—I never knew that she left—I mean she never said a—She just disappeared." Ricardo reported feeling

“sad because you know when you’re young you don’t know why your mom left.” He eventually came to understand through his grandmother’s reassurance that his mother had been working to save money to afford the thousands of dollars it costs to hire a coyote to transfer her children to the U.S. When he was ten years old, Ricardo’s mother returned to El Salvador to make the journey to the U.S. together with her children. It was then that Ricardo and his siblings finally “realized that she did something better for us.” Over time, the U.S. became an important site of Ricardo’s belonging, but the memory growing up without his mother remained at the center of his personal narrative, even some 30 years later.

Children of War

Perhaps more so than separation from family, the Salvadoran civil war was an historical moment that was indelibly scorched into the memories of most U.S. nationals old enough to have lived through it. Many interviewees were too young in the 1970s and 1980s to recall the conflict or to understand its historical origins and objectives. Others retained distinct memories of witnessing war-related incidents. Still other had become directly involved in the conflict in unforgettable ways. Regardless of the degree to which they were ultimately implicated, however, the war was consistently described by as a pivotal moment in most U.S. nationals’ life histories. It dramatically affected their psychosocial development, reorganized their families, and instigated their emigration. It was the initial instigator of the transformation of their national identity and sense of where they belonged in the world. It is for these reasons that U.S. nationals from El Salvador have been aptly referred to as the *hijos de la guerra*—children of the war.

The cases of José Guerrero, 39, and Miguel Rivera represent typical ways the war redirected the lifecourses of U.S. nationals. José emigrated in 1979 and did not witness armed

conflict, yet he still gained firsthand knowledge of the coming war. José explained that quickest way children from his neighborhood could reach school was to pass over a bridge traversed by the military. He recalled how “the cars just flew by and, you know, they could easily be injured, run over.” As a young child he saw “decapitated bodies, body parts, I mean, just gruesome stuff like that.” In an eerie allusion to the migratory journey he would face on his way to the U.S., José learned to avoid the bridge and began to travel along the railroad tracks to school. Wartime tensions also constrained the freedom Miguel felt as a child. He remembered that there was “a little fear because you would start to play and you would not remember the war was there. So, you always had to be careful.” By the age of 12, Miguel had clearly become the target of guerilla recruiters. His parents arranged to have him transported to L.A., where he spent the next 15 years of his life.

Other U.S. nationals had more direct encounters with armed conflict during the civil war. Antonio Portillo, 35, was an infant when political unrest began to escalate in the 1970s. His father was already in the U.S. and his mother worked long hours, so he was raised by his grandparents. In 1979, Antonio’s grandmother took him and his siblings to visit the military airport in San Salvador. While en route to the capital, their bus was caught in the cross-fire of a shootout between the military and the guerilla. Antonio remembered “while driving on the street, there was a shootout. The bus driver just stopped and he got out of the bus, and everybody ran, and I remember my grandmother grabbed me and my brothers and, um, yea, she managed to get us safely out of there.” This traumatic event prompted Antonio’s father to send for his children. By 1985, Antonio attained permanent residence in the U.S. He returned to El Salvador to visit his grandparents when the war was still raging. Antonio saw “people dead on the streets. There were shots everywhere, bombs everywhere.” He and his brother became ill from the

psychological trauma and from the local food. “We just had to go back,” he said. The U.S. had already become the site of his belonging.

Vinny Castaneda, 27, was only four years old when the conflict drove him and his family to the U.S., but he cannot forget its sights and sounds. He lived near a house converted into fort for the guerilla that had a tunnel that connected it to other forts. He remembered being inside the fort, seeing people run in and out of the fort, and frequently hearing gunshots in his neighborhoods. During moments of heightened conflict, Vinny’s family would gather at his grandmother’s house to hide. He said “everybody went to grandma’s house. And they had, like, some bookshelf. They’d move the bookshelf and there was a room back there and we’d all sit in that room...everybody would be in that room. You’d hear people running around on the roof, you can hear things like that, gunshots and all that.” Vinny claimed that his uncle, who was a medical doctor, had been kidnapped by the guerillas and was forced to perform surgeries for them. The captured the uncle and brutally murdered him. This event prompted the family to flee to the U.S.

Some U.S. nationals became directly involved in the war. Such was the case for Pablo Día, 46, the oldest U.S. national in the sample. Pablo became involved with the guerilla after two recruiters repeatedly approached him at high school with promises of a professional career and personal wealth if he joined the fight. Pablo believed the recruiters would not leave him alone until he joined and he was not interested in migrating to the U.S., even though his parents and eight of his siblings were already there. He joined the guerilla and began distributing advertisements about the emergent war. He eventually went to Nicaragua where he trained to be a sniper and learned how to operate land mines. He was on track to be a sergeant when his parents obtained authorization for him to migrate legally to the U.S. Pablo said,

I had the opportunity from my family to offer me to go! So, I left! Because, I'll be honest, I don't want to be a part of the war, because when you in the war, you gonna see kids dying, you gonna see mothers dying. You gonna see people innocent dying. You gonna see a lot of people, they don't even know what this is about, you know! And then you feel in your heart that you don't wanna see no bleeding, you don't wanna see nothing like that. So, I decided to left. I left. I (took) the offer from my mother and I (flew) up there, and I got to United States.

Establishing Home amidst Deportability

When U.S. nationals first arrived in the U.S. most did not have legal status. Over half of the population eventually garnered permanent residency or other temporary statuses through IRCA, asylum, TPS, or family reunification petitions. The rest remained undocumented. Both groups claimed that their legal status or lack thereof was not a major impediment in the U.S., at least initially. Those with documents attained work permits and social security numbers that allowed them to apply for driver's licenses and employment. They could establish sustainable lives and thus they felt more highly embedded in U.S. society than Salvadoran nationals. Those without documents entered mostly as children during the 1980s when it was easier for the unauthorized to live and work in the country. Several also lived in spaces where there was tolerance of undocumented immigrants. These U.S. nationals were able to attend school, participate in civic activities, and find employment. Their deportable status did not negatively impact them in their early years in the U.S. An exchange between Giovanni Bonilla and Luis Aguilar underscores these points;

Giovanni: See, I remember growing up in Seattle. I was illegal. I used to see the immigration patrol go by. They wouldn't do nothing.

Luis; Yeah, just like in NYC. You don't worry about immigration going to your job. You pretty much like, you know, you not scared. You pretty much get by like any normal person. There is less pressure... You know, when I went to school, I was never treated any less. Based on the fact that I was just like any normal student, any normal person.

Giovanni; Back in the day they would walk by you. I used to talk to them. They used to talk to me. Once I got older, I used to make conversation with them. They never asked me about my legal status. They were used to seeing Latinos in the town.

Starting in the mid-1990s, as border and interior enforcement dramatically increased in the U.S., it became difficult for immigrants, especially the undocumented, to establish sustainable lives. This was coincidentally around the same time most U.S. nationals in this sample began to transition to adulthood. It was also around the time many deportees came into contact with the criminal justice system. As Giovanni stated, “they look at us like illegals now. Everywhere they don’t want us...Now if immigration sees you, they like “let me see your papers. What’s your name?” They start questioning you.” By this time, however, most U.S. nationals already completed school in the U.S., found gainful employment, were embedded in friendship cliques, engaged in romantic relationships, got married, and had children. As Giovanni explained, “you know I was young (when I migrated). So, when you a kid, you adapt to everything life this (snaps fingers). They say your brain is like a sponge. It grabs everything. So my way of living and everything became like, I started eating a lot of hamburgers, hot dogs, pizzas...I became American.” Antonio Portillo reiterated, “I grew up (in the U.S.). I know the history of the United States. I know a lot of thing about the United States, more than I know here. I know the American anthem. I don’t even know the one from El Salvador (laughs).”

It is true that many deportees experienced struggles in the U.S. Many experienced struggles, including racial tensions in schools, involvement in gangs, exploitative working conditions, fragile communities, and abusive families. Such struggles did not, however, loosen their attachments to the nation, at least in retrospect. The sometimes problematic ways in which they experienced the U.S. was not perceived necessarily as a lack of integration, or marginalization, in U.S. society, but rather *the way* they had become American. In other words, regardless of vulnerable legal statuses and any other social or economic troubles they

experienced, they had established an unequivocal sense of social belonging in the U.S. The U.S. had clearly become a “home.” As Freddy Mendoza stated,

I never really worried about my legal status because of the way I was raised. The way my mom raised me, I just never felt that I didn’t belong. . . . I always thought that I belonged there. I never felt that I could ever be taken away from that place, you know. It was my *home*.

Deportation as Exile, Return as Uncertain

Because of their relatively high levels of perceived social embeddedness, U.S. nationals’ apprehension by immigration officials often came as a “surprise.” Many who were eligible to naturalize erroneously believed “permanent residency” protected them from deportation. Others could not afford to naturalize or simply failed to do so because they did not realistically think they would be deported. All U.S. nationals struggled to comprehend how the government they perceived as their own could tear them from their families, from their careers, and from their American dreams. This was especially true for deportee, Armando Robles, 29. Armando was taken to the U.S. in 1980 when he was 12 months old. He grew up believing he was a U.S. citizen of Mexican ethnicity. It was in county jail that he first learned he was a permanent resident of the U.S. who held Salvadoran citizenship. He was not placed in removal proceedings at that time, so he continued to live in the U.S. believing permanent residency granted him the right to stay in the U.S. indefinitely. Years later he accepted a plea bargain for an undisclosed drug-related offense unaware that doing so made him removable. In the following exchange he shared the experience of learning about his affiliation with a country he knew nothing about and a country to which he would eventually be removed.

Armando I didn’t even know I was Salvadoran. I was from—I grew up with a lot of Mexicans so I’m thinking, you know, I’m just like everybody else. One day [I discover] I’m Salvadoran and I’m like, damn, what the fuck is Salvadoran? Where’s that at?

Katie You didn’t know where you were from?

Armando No, I didn't know. The first time I went to jail they told me I was Salvadoran. They told me, 'where you born at?' I told 'em 'here.'

Katie Your mom never told you that you were born here?

Armando No, no, we never talked about it...We had a distant relation. She went to work. She come and eat and, um, it was like I said, she was an alcoholic...I was five years old and she would come home drunk. I'll leave. I'll go sit on the roof 'cause I didn't want to see her drunk. But I didn't know. They asked me, 'why you lying to me?' I was like, 'I ain't lying. I was born here.' They told me I'm Salvadoran. 'Where the hell is that at?'

Katie You didn't know any Salvadorans in your community, or it was all Mexicans and Blacks?

Armando Naw, all Mexicans and Blacks...It was very, very rare, Salvadoran people. I mean, they're not going to go around, like, 'I'm Salvadoran, ay, pupusas!'

Jorge Rodríguez' deportation also came as a surprise. Jorge migrated to the U.S. at age six during the war and was deported 25 years later. He was a green card holder who was unaware that a felony could lead to removal. He was incarcerated for gun possession, but was under the impression he would be released in the U.S. after serving his sentence. To his surprise he was transferred into immigration detention and was eventually deported. He explained the dissonance and despair he experienced through this process;

(Law enforcement) asked me if you legal. I said, "Yeah, I'm legal. I got the green card." ... Next thing I know I got my freedom. I got my days coming that I'm gonna go free and next thing ... they told me "You're gonna get released, but to INS custody." I was like, "What? For what?"...They were like ... "you have a felony on your conviction, so as long as you have a felony in your conviction you're eligible for deportation."... So from there hell started, you know? I was going crazy. I was in detention ... almost four months ... It was a gun possession case ... I had no privileges but sign and get deported.You know, that killed me. It was depressing my children, my mom, my kids, my girl, my whole family, you know? *Everything's* over there.

Jorge's sense that deportation can tear apart whole lives, or "everything," was a sentiment expressed by many U.S. nationals, especially when they reflected upon separation from friends and family. As Ernesto Gonzalez, 34, succinctly expressed, "I felt sad to leave my children and my wife. Yeah, my friends and everything. In other words, when they deported me, I left everything—*everything* over there." Freddy Mendoza shared a similar sentiment when he stated,

“I was destroyed inside. I was destroyed. It was horrible. It’s a horrible feeling. It’s like you know you will be so far away from your family, you know. Your friends and your whole life is just like ripped in front of you...They pull you out of *everything* you know in your life.” This sense of being torn from “everything” was interpreted as a profound “betrayal” by the U.S. government; the process of deportation was considered a de facto “exile” from the lives they established in the U.S. As Victor, a deportee Susan Coutin interviewed in El Salvador in 2008, expressed;

“I was ready to serve my country, I was a registered voter, I voted for governor of CA, I voted for presidents...my whole life was over there, my wife, my kids. I was a total American; I was American in my heart, my mind. And for them to just uproot me and just throw me (away)...I’ve been *banished* from my country...And they said forever!”¹⁴ (Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012: 113-114).

In immigration detention U.S. nationals preoccupied themselves over how their family members would establish sustainable lives post-removal. It was unreasonable for their children to move to El Salvador because their children were U.S. citizens who would not benefit by immigrating to El Salvador. They worried about where their kids would live, how their caretakers might provide for them financially, and how the children would manage separation emotionally. Most of the 70 children left behind by U.S. nationals ended up staying with trusted U.S.-based spouses, partners, parents, and extended family members. But most interviewees remained troubled that their children would grow up in single-parent and reconfigured homes. In a few cases, children were placed in foster care, leading at least one deportee—Juan Romero, 39, to declare that the U.S. “stole the family.” After Juan’s deportation, his relationship with his wife faltered, she divorced him, she became addicted to drugs, and their two U.S. children were placed in foster care. In other cases, deportees expressed anger and guilt that they could no longer serve as a breadwinner and were to become financial dependents upon their arrival in El

¹⁴ It should be noted that only U.S. citizens are permitted to vote in federal elections. This interviewee was a permanent resident. What is important here is not the accuracy of his claim to voting for the president of the U.S., but rather the claim’s intended purpose. He was determined to assert his American-ness in spite of the U.S. state’s lack of full recognition of his personhood.

Salvador. As Jorge said “It’s like ‘wow, I can’t do nothing for them from here,’ you know? They got to see what they can do for *me*.”

Detained U.S. nationals not only worried for their loved ones, but also worried about how they would survive in El Salvador post-removal. As Ricardo Delgado, 38, and many others agreed, “I didn’t have any idea” about how to build sustainable lives in the land of their birth and citizenship. They didn’t know where they would live, where they would work, and how they might establish relationships with extended family members upon whom they would soon become highly dependent. With inadequate transnational familiarity and social connections most U.S. nationals were being deported to uncertainty. As Jorge expressed, they simply had to “wait and figure it out” once they arrived in El Salvador. Jorge’s immigration judge was also aware of this dilemma, but with a lack of discretion under current immigration law, was unable to do anything about it. Jorge recounted the exchange with his judge in the following quote.

I was like, “What country?” “You go back to your country.” “What country? What you talking about? I was raised here. What am I gonna do in my country? I have no culture over in that country. What am I gonna do? ”...“Judge, what am I gonna do when I get there?” And he said, “I can’t tell you that. You’ll find out when you get there.”

Unlike Armando, Jorge, Ricardo, and others, some U.S. nationals gained limited knowledge about of the context of return in El Salvador, typically from their family members. In at least one case, familial rhetoric around El Salvador was optimistic. Pablo Día had left El Salvador in 1977 when the war was brewing. He was to be deported in 2007, fifteen years after the end of the conflict. Having visited El Salvador numerous times in the post-war years, his mother was particularly impressed by the country’s investments in infrastructure and business in the post-war years. She used to tell him “you should go to El Salvador for visiting.” You should see after the war up there...nice, this and that...or you see a lot of business around and...(it is nice.” Pablo would later report from his own experience that “it ain’t no *nice!*” He had become

accustomed to a “higher quality of life” in the U.S. and thus was unable to appreciate any progress made in the post-war era. His mother had grown up in El Salvador and returned occasionally to vacation and visit family. Her sanguine vision of El Salvador was clearly from the perspective someone who voluntarily returned, but a deportee who forced to return to a country that had become foreign through the passage of time. She could leave the country at-will and thus could more fully appreciate the progress made in El Salvador.

Most deportees were fed more dismal information about El Salvador than Pablo. They were made aware of the history of repression against gang members and the conflation of deportee and gang identities. U.S. nationals were informed of *La Sombra Negra* (the Black Shadow), a vigilante death squad that tortured and assassinated suspected criminals and gang members in the late 1980s. Ramiro Díaz, 32, explained that in 1994 immigrants in his detention facility “used to talk a lot about *La Sombra Negra*—that people used to get killed when they used to come back here. That’s what I was afraid of. I mean to be shot as I came off the plane.” Over a decade later, *La Sombra Negra* had supposedly dissolved, but U.S. nationals continued to hear discourse around the state violence they would likely experience upon return. Giovanni’s immigration judge told him, for example, that “if you don’t change your behavior, they are going to kill you in that country.” Jorge was also led to believe he would be murdered;

“I thought I was gonna get killed...(Other detainees) were like, “Hey, you got tattoos man, you’re bald. You’re gonna go over there, they’re gonna put you in a police car, they’ll gonna take you to (unclear), and they’re gonna kill you. They’re gonna execute you like they execute in Iraq.” I was like “*What? What?*” I was like, “Are you serious?””

Jorge later declared that the discourse circulating in detention was “a lie,” because he was not harmed upon return, nor was anyone he knew. Still, deportees consistently expressed that they were afraid for their lives. They worried how, if they were to survive, how they would be treated at the airport, where they would live, if they would be able to secure a job, if they would be targeted by

gangs, and how they might preserve their ruptured families. In other words, they were concerned if they would be able to establish “home-like” conditions in El Salvador.

Navigating a Foreign Land

When U.S. nationals began to navigate El Salvador they began to experience a reverse culture shock. They were displaced from that which was familiar and comforting and were placed in a foreign land, often living with extended family members with whom they had little *a priori* connection. This was often described as an alienating experience. U.S. nationals sometimes used the language of “I was lost” or “I felt lost” to describe their first few months and years in El Salvador. As Pablo said, the population “looks like they are lost. They look like they don’t know where they are going...They don’t know where to go. They just like little animals. They are like a new puppy in the house. And, the puppy just got in the house. They don’t even know if he wants to walk in the backyard, or if he wants to go to the living room, or go pee-pee on the carpet...or (if) they gonna get hurt by the owner who owns the house, or cleaning the house, you know? They look kind of like disappointed a lot in their lives.”

U.S. nationals’ stories of “learning the ropes” highlighted a sense of infantilization many felt upon return. Pablo was particularly generous with these stories. In the following exchange he explains how he, at 46 years old, quite literally had to “learn how to walk” in his country of birth. Pablo’s experience is certainly not unique to El Salvador, but his response to his experience highlights the degree to which he felt estranged in his country-of-citizenship after return.

Pablo: The first thing that I trip on in this country is—and I was dumb, I was so dumb—walking in the sidewalks. You gotta watch for the poop from the dogs!

Katie: I did too, here, the first day! And, it was all over my foot!

Pablo: It happened to myself and I laughed! I would barely wake up in the morning. I would go to the store or whatever, and I’d do *that*, and I’d go “ugh!!!” Well, better “wake up,” I used to tell myself, “you’ve gotta learn how to walk. You

gotta watch it. Just where you are stepping.”...Up there (in the U.S.), you don’t have to worry about things like that. You never step in stuff like that, you know? And, that’s the first thing that I hate when I first came....It made me mad. It got me sick. I didn’t like it. I wasn’t happy. And, I said, “oh stupid country!”

Ernesto Gonzalez, 34, did not have to learn how to walk, but he did need to learn how to sleep. When Ernesto was deported, he went to live with extended family in a rural village outside of San Salvador. In the U.S., he had become accustomed to “waking up in time for work. You can stay asleep until like nine, probably.” But his local post-deportation context was quite different. He continued, “Here, you arrive. You come with the system from over there, so you cannot rest because of the hens! Not for anything!”

Jorge, like several other deportees with limited Spanish skills or lack of knowledge of Salvadoran colloquialisms, had to learn how to speak. He said, “When I got here I couldn’t speak Spanish. My life was English, so when I got here you had people asking me questions in Spanish slowly, I was like, “Slow down! Slow down! Can you repeat it?” They were like, “Should repeat it again?” And I was like, “Oh, *yeah*.” I used to write – they had me write, um, my mom had to write the address from here that I couldn’t pronounce “Usulután.” I couldn’t pronounce none of that, so I was like, “This is where I live. But who’s gonna take me there?”

Most also had to learn how to navigate the geography of El Salvador. Ricardo Delgado, for instance, said, ‘I was trying to know the places and learn the streets cause you know they don’t have names on the streets. It’s kind of hard when they tell you these places; it’s kind of hard to go to places like that.’

As deportees began to adjust to life in El Salvador, U.S. nationals could not help but compare it to the life they had become accustomed to in the U.S., a process Brotherton and Barrios (2011) refer to this process as “constant comparison.” In observing the differences between the two countries, they sometimes expressed opposition toward acculturation. Frank

Costa, 27, provides a good example of such behavior. Frank had migrated to the U.S. at three years old and was deported 24 years later. His extended family was wealthy and well-known in El Salvador so he was materially comfortable upon return. Still, he had two children in the U.S. and he was not accustomed to Salvadoran culture. Speaking in Spanish, in particular, seemed to make him feel disempowered. In the following excerpt from his interview he expresses distaste, opposition even, toward living life in Spanish.

- Frank Look, I don't watch that much movies here cause they're mostly in Spanish. I don't like that much Spanish. I don't like to read Spanish books. I don't like to listen to the radio here. I carry my iPod.
- Katie You don't speak Spanish here that much?
- Frank I don't like it.
- Katie Why?
- Frank I'm not used talking to girls here in Spanish. I go, 'usted, miss, disculpe, señora.' I'm not talking like that. I'm not used to that. We say 'what's up, hi, what's up.' But I don't know. I'm not used to that. I like Spanish. I love being Hispanic. But I don't like to speak Spanish at all.

In their interviews some deportees actually became more “American” than they may have been in the U.S. As Antonio Portillo proudly proclaimed, “America is the best country in the world. It's America. That's the land of the free, man. America is the best country.” Sometimes their feelings of post-deportation infantilization manifested in rhetoric reflecting a sense of superiority over El Salvador because of their ties to the U.S. Cristian Ordoná, for example, stated that Salvadoran “culture is bad...a lot of people don't respect nothing, so I'm like 'what the hell.' People bump into you and don't say excuse me. They pass by, just walk on by. They step on your shoes and they don't even say sorry after doing it. They don't even say excuse me before they do it. So I was like 'what's wrong with these people.' Man, 'cause I come from showing respect. My mom taught me some rules I gotta live by, you know, ethics. And they don't have it

here. I don't know why, but we lost our culture. I don't know if it was the war or what, but our culture is real bad; its bad. You know, but I try to do the best that I can and I'm surviving now."

Though certainly not all, many deportees believed El Salvador was lagging "behind" the U.S. culturally, politically, and economically. In some cases, such observations surrounded the diffusion of popular culture from the U.S and the larger global economy to and through El Salvador. Ernie Martínez, for example, claimed that, he "came from the future to the past." He perceived San Salvador as analogous to "L.A. in the '80s," when it was cool to wear "Nikes" and "Levis." Bobby Anthony, 40, concurred. He said "*they're behind, way behind...I mean they're hearing like Donna Sommer here. They're hearing like Michael Jackson. They're hearing – you know what I'm saying? Okay, they're hearing old stuff! And when you hear it and you see them bumping it, you're like, "Oh my God! What are you doing?!" But that's their level. That's where they're at.*"

Referring U.S. nationals also claimed that El Salvador was imitating the U.S. economically and politically. Some highlighted the U.S.'s history of interventionism that led to the neocolonial relationship that exists between the two countries today. Others ignored U.S. interventionism and blamed the Salvadoran state for inviting and ineffectively implementing U.S. policies. Pablo said he can "never say anything bad about the U.S." and that he "never experienced any discrimination in that country" and "could not tell them how to run their laws" despite the fact that he was deported after establishing his life there for thirty years. However, he eagerly criticized El Salvador for dollarizing the economy. He said that, in El Salvador, "it is monkey see, monkey do, just like the United States." El Salvador was for him, however, a poor copy of the U.S. Ignoring rampant socioeconomic inequality in the U.S. he claimed that in El Salvador "the people that have business and money, they don't care. They have their money.

They don't have no problem... And then, it's who they really step on, it's the poor people. They step on their face, on their throat, so they don't have much air to breathe!" He later claimed that, as opposed to the U.S. where there is "no corruption," there is "a lot of corruption in El Salvador...And that's why this country *never gonna grow up*. It hasn't grown up in so many years right now and I don't think it's gonna be growing up about those things in the future."

Stigmatization and Racialization

U.S. nationals' feelings of alienation in the country of their birth were made worse by the stigmatization associated with their deportee status in Salvadoran society. As Juan Romero stated, "we come like a big L over here...a big Loser, that's the word in English. Loser. Nobody wanna be a loser." All U.S. nationals reported a sense of being viewed as inferior in Salvadoran society in one way or another, usually in the first few years of arrival. The degree to which deportees felt stigmatized varied. In some instances they thought the public just looked at them as "people that were over there and they just didn't take advantage of what they had." Other times, they were viewed as "Gringos" who believed they were superior to the local population despite their "failed immigrant" status. The sense of being losers or failed immigrants was heightened for individuals with other markers of American-ness, such as an accent infused with by English or Mexican Spanish, the use of slang from the U.S., and a style of urban attire deportees referred to as "baggy." It was especially problematic for individuals with gang histories and with tattoos, whether they were gang related or not.

Many U.S. nationals who felt stigmatized as criminals were aware of the history of the U.S. deporting gang members to El Salvador starting in the mid-1990s. They also understood

their stigmatization as criminals as the product of a state-led moral panic that effectively tarnished the reputations of U.S. nationals. Miguel explains this process with clarity,

When the United States started to deport, the government of El Salvador convinced the people that we, those of us who came deported, were criminals, were rapists, and that we hadn't changed, and that we came to make the country worse; to ruin it. That we are still coming with this mentality to grab a child, teach him how to be in a gang, how to make a gang, use drugs, or rape our women. So, the government started to poison the minds of the people, of all of the people in general. So they look at us like criminal people. So, they don't look at me like I am a human. Instead they look at me like a criminal.

Some U.S. nationals also understood their stigmatization as a remnant of the gang crisis and low-level street crime that has plagued El Salvador over the past decades. U.S. nationals recounted stories of people they identified as gang members who would, for instance, jump on the bus and start begging or threatening people for money. Like Mauricio explained, “I catch the bus when I go to work and come back—and all of a sudden you see some guy jump on the bus “well, you know what, hey, I'm from this gang. I'm so and so, you know what, you think you could give me a dollar. I ain't robbin' or killin' anyone.” So, the people—what happens—the people show them fear.” Interactions like this seemed to confirm in the minds of the general population that people who look like and carry themselves like gang members are potential threats. As Ernie Lovos, 38, explained, “if you're a deportee, you're tagged, okay, as being a criminal, as being in prison before you came here, as being a gang member.”

The biggest complaint of most U.S. nationals like Ernie was the stigma inflicted upon them due to the presence of their tattoos. As Ernie explained, “it has nothing to do with gangs. If you you got tattoos...and they don't know the difference.” Tattoos were symbolic markers—or “flags”—that signified to others that these deportees claimed identification elsewhere; to another nation, or to deviant subcultures within their own nation (Grabham 2009). Regardless of what they were intended to signal when deportees' first inscribed their skin with ink, in the Salvadoran context they became associated with violence, threat, and uncertainty. And the carriers of the

tattoos became the objects of a stigmatization that resembles xenophobia or racism. Several deportees invoked the language of racism they apparently learned in the U.S. to understand the “other-ization” they experienced in El Salvador as a result of their tattoos and other markers of American-ness. Giovanni provides an example,

The real racist here about this here—the tattoos. It’s a big change. You know, up there (in the U.S.) you don’t have to be a gangster or be bad to wear some jewelry or a basketball jersey and show off your tattoos. Here, it’s a different thing. People look at you like, “oh you’re gangster, so watch out.” And you might not even be one, but just because you’re a little baggy, or “cause you talk a little different, watch out.

Deportees’ racialization as gang members was a typification that they found difficult to escape. They were not formally discriminated against on the basis of being a deportee. But they began to experience a “double consciousness,” in which they were constantly aware of their American-ness in spite of their Salvadoran citizenship, especially in public places. They experienced a continuum of informal prejudicial and discriminatory actions from the general public, police and security officers, and gang members. Like has been highlighted in the case of African Americans in the post-civil rights era in the U.S., these actions ranged from avoidance and rejection to physical threats and harassment (see Feagin 1991). In these ways deportee status operated much like a master status, at least for U.S. nationals.

U.S. nationals’ experiences with avoidance occurred as they were engaged in their “daily rounds” (Goffman 1963). Presumably out of fear that they might be robbed, threatened, or physically harmed, locals reportedly avoided making eye contact with these deportees, purposefully walked out of their way to avoid walking passed them, refused to sit next to them on the bus, gave up their seats on the bus to avoid threats from deportees who were not threatening them, and gave them money to avoid potentially being robbed. Luis Aguilar was an individual who did not have a gang history in the U.S. He grew up in New York City in a neighborhood populated by Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. There was a lack of racial tensions in

his surroundings and he never became involved in gangs. Regardless, Luis had a few visible tattoos and wore “baggy” clothes that signaled to others that he was a potential threat. He contested his treatment in his interview.

To have somebody look at you, you can afford. But everybody looks at you different. I mean, I can understand if you are in the United States, you will get looked at different because you are a different color. I understand that. But here, it's just that you are the same people. You speak the same language. And you sit down on the bus and just because you dress differently! There may be an empty seat on the bus. But he may prefer to stand up on the bus than sit next to me. Those are the things I get fed up with.

U.S. nationals were not only avoided, but overtly rejected by the local population. As is shown in the next section, they were often refused jobs on the basis of their tattoos and other physical characteristics. Their physical presence was also frequently rejected in certain public spaces. U.S. nationals reported being the objects of surveillance by security officers on several occasions. This was a phenomenon I experienced on at least one occasion. I held a series of interviews with U.S. nationals at a casual breakfast café inside of a popular commercial shopping center in San Salvador. The restaurant did not have many patrons and we had paid for multiple meals, coffees, and offered a generous tip. My interviewees all claimed to not have an active gang life in El Salvador. Still, about half way through the interviews, management asked us to leave and asked me to stop bringing people to the restaurant. It was clear in that moment that we, as a collective, represented a suspicious or undesirable group in need of “removal.” Though we were doing no apparent harm, we—or, perhaps more accurately, “they”—were rejected on the basis of physical appearance.

Another common complaint by U.S. nationals racialized as gang members was the surveillance, harassment, criminalization, and physical attacks they endured from police officers. Every U.S. national with a tattoo reported at least one stop-and-search encounter with local police officers. For most, interaction with the police was a routine part of their post-deportation existence. As Rolando explained:

The cops, they involve us. We walk down the street, they pull us over. “You’re a gang member.” It happens to be all the time. A couple weeks ago they had me there at the bus stop. They are like “where are you going?” and I am like “I am going to work.” And they asked for my work badge and they were like, “alright, but life up your shirt.” And I am like, “aw, man!” They wanna see the tattoos. So, shit, basically, we just getting harassed her all the time, especially by the police.”

Rolando was never physically harmed by the police, but there were numerous reports of police brutality. Andrés Meranda was a former gang member in the U.S. who reported no affiliation to gangs in El Salvador. He had one small visible tattoo, which prompted the police to pull him over 35 times. He explained that, “gang members know their tats. They know what kind of tattoos belongs to a gang and they know which tattoos don’t. But cops don’t. Cops right here, they don’t.” Andrés reported being “punched in the chest” by a police officer who did not believe him when he denied local gang involvement. Several others reported being “beat up” or “having the shit kicked out of me.”

Jorge reported that he was not involved in gangs in El Salvador but he was a constant target of police officers who he believed to be jealous of him. He said, ‘you’re being deported but you still have a little money in your pocket and you look nice and you dress nice and you have, you know? And you look nice and they don’t like that. The police don’t like that. Actually, the police hates that. They know that you’re deported, you’re a criminal, but you still have a nice little job here. Or you work hard and you have a little money and you have a little car, you have—you have things that they don’t have, you know? Entonces ellos—es la envidia [So they—it’s the jealousy], you know?’ Jorge claimed such *envidia* of his relative material success in spite of his tainted deportee status resulted in him being arrested under suspicion of being a gang leader, a rapist, and a murderer in El Salvador. He recounted,

Since I’ve been here there have been cops at my house, raiding my house. Say I’m the leader of the gangs, when I don’t belong to the gangs from here, from El Salvador. They say I’m a killer. They say I’m a rapist. They say—they tried to get me with so many things. But I guess, that’s just what they say...Once you go to court then [the judge] asks you if you really done this. They wanna know evidence. ‘Where’s the evidence...?’ ‘No, well, we think because he’s been deported.’ You can’t *think* because I been deported that I’m raping, killing people here! Come on. No, you can’t *think*. There’s nothing. That’s—[Say] I’m a police officer and I’m gonna think he

killed somebody? [Refers to another deportee in his focus group.] How am I gonna *think* that he's killing somebody? These people's crazy.

Giovanni Bonilla believed that the treatment of deported U.S. nationals by police forces in El Salvador was a racialized practice. He utilized the language of racism he imported from his experiences in the U.S. throughout his personal narrative. He claimed,

They real racist about the tattoos here. Look, me, I didn't want to adjust my tattoos and my way of dressing. You know, (in the U.S.) you don't have to be a gangster or be bad to wear some jewelry or a basketball jersey and show off your tattoos. You do that here, you walk two blocks, and the third block, you are dead. Or the cops got you all wrapped up and they gonna take you downtown. And the people look at you like, "Oh, you gangsta! Watch out!" And you might not even be one, but just because you a little baggy, watch out! Or they call the cops and you might not even be doing *nothin'*! That happened to me a lot. It still happens to me. *Man*, with all the shit I've been through down here, I would be Rodney King up there!

Many U.S. nationals were not only the targets of police officers, but also the targets of gang members. Some U.S. nationals claimed that the local gang members ignored them. At the other extreme, however, were several deportees who reported no direct gang affiliation in El Salvador who were threatened, beat up, and shot by gang members. This was especially the case for deportees who had tattoos signaling identification with rival gangs. Antonio Portillo was one such individual. He had been active in gangs in the U.S. but he was raised by Christian parents and converted to Christianity while in prison. He wanted to start a new life free of violence in El Salvador, but threats from gang members followed him. He described the problems he had with gangs when he first arrived,

Word got out around that there was a new guy here in the neighborhood all with tattoos and stuff. (The gang members) decided to come. They didn't jump me, but they just threatened me. They said "if you come around here again, I'm going to kill you." So, I didn't take that as a joke. I just decided to move. I went to the beach. I stayed at this hotel for like almost five weeks or close to five weeks. Over there, they have a swimming pool. It was a nice, nice place. And I didn't know. I was going swimming and stuff. But, the local gang members saw me again. And, I decided to go to the pier to avoid them. I was eating some seafood. And they came from behind and were like, "hey fool, where you from?" And, I was like, "I don't want no problems. I go to church and stuff." They said "take your shirt off." And I said no. And that's when they had the knife, a big knife. Lucky, the guy dropped the knife. But, yea, they beat me up pretty bad ... I had bruises all over me. They told me if they see me again, they were going to kill me.

The stigmatization and violence many U.S. nationals encountered in Salvadoran society impacted their relations with local family. Family members often worried about the safety of deportees. Giovanni said “when I came here, I would wear baggies and stuff. My family thought I wasn’t going to come home. When I left the house, they used to be scared that I would get killed because I was so American.” Luis reported a similar phenomenon. He was never involved in gangs in the U.S. but his personal style resembled that of gang members. He described his appearance saying he wore “Dickies, my Levis always creased down, my hair back, my [pony]tail, my earrings, you know. My aunt, when I would say, “hey Tía, I am going.” She used to say “where are you going like *that*?” You are going to get killed!” Luis actually had a gun placed to his head on two occasions on the bus events he believed were tied to his appearance. Sometimes such threats came home with deportees. In Antonio’s case, gang members came to his house and threatened the entire family. Incidents like this, or the fear of them, caused some family members to be hesitant about continuing to provide housing for U.S. nationals. Fragile familial support created by the hostile context of return reinforced this subpopulation’s marginality in El Salvador.

Economic Embeddedness

Like Salvadoran nationals, U.S. nationals found employment to be one of the greatest barriers to establishing a sustainable, or subjectively adequate, home in El Salvador. Most were initially dependent upon extended family post-removal. They initially survived off the housing, food, transportation, and financial support provided by these family members. Those with families in the U.S. who had sufficient economic resources also often provided them remittances. In most cases the remittances came directly to them, but there were some instances in which

remittances were channeled through extended family members. Individuals who did not have extended family often lived in the houses their families abroad owned prior to migration or later built with their remittances. A few people did not have places to reside but were taken in temporarily by other deportees they met in detention or in the airport in San Salvador, or they were taken in by gang members.

Like the deportees interviewed by Golash-Boza (2013) in Jamaica, financial reliance on family support was often disheartening for U.S. nationals. Some happily accepted familial financial assistance, like Freddy introduced in chapter 5 and Ricardo Delgado who said, “I was on vacation for a year.” After some time, however, most reported feelings of guilt that they were accepting remittances from family who were struggling financially in the U.S. Some also felt like their presence was not truly desired with their local extended families. Most of the interviewees wanted to establish financial independence from their U.S. and El Salvador-based families by finding sustainable local employment. Unfortunately, several complained that locals viewed them like immigrants coming to “take their jobs.” Ernie Lovos explained this phenomenon.

It’s similar [to discrimination unauthorized immigrants experience in the U.S.]. So now it’s the other way around. Now we are in our country and they think we came, you know—we’re the outcasts or the foreigners coming into their country and taking their jobs. So we’re kind of feeling in the same boat we did in the States.

High levels of stigmatization as potentially threatening, job-stealing foreigners prevented many U.S. nationals from seeking out jobs in the Salvadoran labor market. Afraid he would be rejected in the local labor market, Pablo, who had been back in El Salvador for a year but was only just starting to look for a job, explained,

The hardest part of being deported is thinking that if I wanna work, it’s hard to find it. Like right now, I’m trying to get me a job. I wanna work and I expected God to give me an opportunity here, to give me an employer here and work here. I have been helping around my brother’s house, so at first, I wasn’t looking for a job. But, for the last three weeks, I started having in my mind that I need a place to work. I need to keep my mind, myself, busy. And, I need a little money to spend day-to-day. But, I think it’s gonna be hard to get a job. (Locals) treat me like I am not from here. They act like they are threatened by the deportees, thinking we will steal their jobs.

After an initial period of adjustment most U.S nationals sought employment, but they had a difficult time because they could not easily meet local requirements of job candidates. On several occasions they reported being rejected by Salvadoran employers who would not accept references or educational certifications from the U.S. Such was the case for Elias, 28, an individual who migrated to the U.S. at 6 months old and was deported 21 years later. Unable to find an adequate job in the local labor market, he now assists his extended family members he barely knows with fish cultivation in a rural hamlet outside of San Salvador. He shared,

It's been hard for me to find employment because I need certain requirements. It makes it impossible for me. I need some certifications in order to get employment. It's pretty sad because I could get a job in most of these places, like the airport, because of my English. But, if I go up there and they ask where is my certificate from where I went to school, and I don't have it, even though I am pretty good for the job, not just for the fact that I speak English, they won't give me the job ... And the other thing is the references. I haven't been here too long, but I don't really know anyone who will be a reference for me. I can put my U.S. references and they might accept them and not even call. So, it could be a good thing for you. But, usually they want the Salvadoran references and I don't have anyone who will say good things about me here yet.

U.S. nationals also reported that their criminal histories from the U.S. stigmatization as gangsters in El Salvador followed them as they entered the labor force. They often had to take lie detector tests to prove that they were not been involved in criminal activities in El Salvador or the U.S. Many Salvadoran employers also asked them to take off their shirts to prove that they did not have tattoos that would indicate poor character. Mateo, 32, reported troubles in this regard,

We tried to go to see what kinds of jobs you can get in, but they see you with tattoos, and there isn't nothing you can do. They just see you and look at you and say, "aw naw, you are fine." Plus, the majority of the jobs here, you have to do a polygraph test. And they ask you those questions. It's for everybody. They ask you if you have tattoos, use drugs, and stuff. Man, you can't hide anything from them! If they think you are a gang member, you are done.

The lack of references, inadequate educational certifications, and discrimination on the basis of presumed gang membership makes the labor market problematic to navigate for U.S. nationals. However, what is significantly more problematic is the salary they would likely earn.

Most child migrant deportees worked in the U.S. where they earned wages far above the average Salvadoran. They had become accustomed to significantly higher standards of living. As a result, most rejected entry into the Salvadoran labor market as much as it rejected them. Several refused to work in low-paying menial positions because they felt they deserved better treatment and compensation. This *mutual rejection* placed many U.S. transnationals in structurally vulnerable economic positions. Many remained unemployed and reliant on external sources of financial support. Some eventually participated in the informal market, selling food in local farmers markets or selling some commodities on public buses. A few others turned toward gangs for survival. The result is that, absent of alternate opportunity structures for economic advancement, U.S. nationals remain economically marginalized and thus perceive their economic embeddedness to be low.

Interestingly, a few alternative opportunity structures exist in the Salvadoran labor market for deported U.S. nationals. Industries that cater to foreigners, such hotels, are welcoming to some deportees because of their English skills. Ramiro Díaz accepted a job cleaning rooms in a high-end San Salvador hotel and now he works as a bellhop. He reports making 700 dollars a month because he receives generous tips from his mostly foreign customers. Interestingly, for Ramiro, his gang history in the U.S. helped him be successful in the legitimate labor market in El Salvador. He learned to model “hustlers” who maneuvered in ways—often through the careful manipulation of the people with whom they deal—that would allow them to make quick cash. He said, “over there (in prison in the U.S.) you meet a lot of—they call them hustlers; people that likes to hustle. Actually, on the street, the same. You meet people that like to hustle money. Same thing here, but only in a good way. How to make money. See, I’m a bell boy. I work with tips. It all depends on how I treat people, or what I do for people, that’s (how) I get my money.”

Foreign-owned telecommunications firms such as Dell and Sykes also operate “call centers” in El Salvador. These companies value deportees for their bilingual abilities, high school completion or equivalency, computer skills, and cultural capital from the U.S. Deported U.S. nationals are also ideal, or “preferred” employees because they are in a structurally vulnerable position and are thus willing to accept positions that might be considered too precarious for well-educated local Salvadorans (Brooks and McKail 2008). In El Salvador, call center jobs are scarce and competitive. However, many U.S. nationals were informed by locals, the staff at *Bienvenido a Casa*, and other deportees that call centers were actively seeking deportees as laborers.

Once deportees, or any applicants, submit their résumés to call centers, they can still be disqualified for employment on the basis of recent criminal records, a lack of computer experience or English skills, poor presentation of self, and other factors. However, deportees interviewed in this study claimed that the call centers that employed them accepted their U.S. references and education credentials without contestation. They also did not discriminate on the basis of tattoos to the degree other employers reportedly did. As a result, many deported U.S. nationals have infiltrated call centers in El Salvador. Mauricio shared his experience securing employment,

I started looking for a job around a year and half. It was a really hard time. I didn't find one right away. Not until I got to (the call center). That is the thing, where we are working right now, that is what I like about it, they don't discriminate there. I can say that is one of the good companies I have encountered out here. They know you will work efficiently. They see the way you are.

Call center employment can yield many benefits systematically denied to the working poor in El Salvador, including most deported Salvadoran nationals interviewed for this project. U.S. nationals reported that they earned approximately \$500 per month, or about \$25 per day, for their labor, as opposed to the approximate \$8 per day reported by many rural and menial

laborers. Call center jobs also provided some benefits and opportunities for promotion. They allowed U.S. nationals the opportunity to further their educations through online classes on topics relevant to their customer service positions, like learning Microsoft Excel, which can help them become mobile within the industry and may be marketable elsewhere. Such opportunities allowed deportees to become financially independent. It increases their economic embeddedness, makes their lives more sustainable, and thus makes it easier—though not entirely feasible for all—to imagine building a home in El Salvador. Mauricio explains,

I am happy. The (typical working-class) salary for the Salvadoran people is not really good. So, we are doing really good. We are making like \$500 per month. That is not bad here! We are getting hands-on training. They have that program there too, where you can take classes at work, online. It is through a program that they have here, like through the States. It can be whatever you want to work with, like Excel, stuff like that, programs or customer service, or, you know, something that can help you in your job. It's good. And another good thing is the special program, where if you want to be a team leader in the company, they will help you. It's all free. But, that's the thing, in your job, you gotta do good so you can get those privileges. Like, you gotta work like 6 months at least. It is a company that will let you grow inside. They let you grow from regular team member, to agent, to team leader. Promotions, you know, it's good. I mean, it's not the States, but...

Coping and Homemaking Strategies

As strangers in their native land U.S. nationals found it difficult to create a meaningful sense of home in El Salvador, at least initially. Psychoculturally, they felt like outsiders in their first few months and years. They constantly compared Salvadoran society to what they experienced in the U.S., often coming to the conclusion that the U.S. is culturally and economically superior to El Salvador. They faced a hostile societal reception and a poor economic context of return which led to patterns of avoidance and discrimination that caused them to find sustainable employment struggle and form meaningful relationships with locals. They did not encounter a large community of support to help with adjustment and provide a sense of localized identity. These experiences cumulatively left them with low social embeddedness relative to deported Salvadoran nationals. Several of the U.S. nationals reacted to

their social marginalization by re-migrating clandestinely to the U.S. Some become dependent upon alcohol or drugs. Several mentioned suicidal ideations. However, even as they coped in these negative ways they also developed more positive coping strategies that helped them survive, reduce stigmatization that inhibited embeddedness, and make sense of their post-deportation existence.

The coping strategy most commonly employed by deportees was the use of or dependence upon *transnational ties*. This was especially the case for U.S. nationals who were forced to leave family behind in the U.S. when they were removed. Deportees accepted remittances and maintained transnational communication with their loved ones. Frank Costa, 27, represented such a case. At the time of his interview, Frank was dependent upon remittances from the U.S., as were most U.S. nationals at some point. He did not like to communicate with Salvadorans who had never been to the U.S., explaining that “I don’t really talk to most of them. I don’t communicate with a lot of people here because people have two faces here.” Frank preferred to spend most of his days locked up in his house, communicating with family and friends in the U.S. on Facebook. The following exchange highlights his attachment to transnational communication to cope with the life and the people he considers unbearable in El Salvador.

Frank: I just need myself. I need my daughter, my family. I have enough friends (on Facebook) if I need to talk to somebody.

Katie: What if Facebook didn’t exist?

Frank: Twitter

Katie: Or if any of that didn’t exist?

Frank: Magic Jack

Katie: Magic Jack? What’s Magic Jack?

Frank: Satellite phone (an internet phone service)

Gatekeeper: If you didn't have computer usage at all, period?

Frank: Damn, I'd be going crazy. I'd be purchasing a bunch of stamps.

Other strategies employed by U.S. nationals were geared less toward dealing with family separation and post-deportation alienation and more toward guarding against stigmatization, discrimination, and violent attacks. One of the most discussed modes of this sort was *managing mobility*. Frank Costa engaged in this strategy when he chose to stay inside his house rather than socialize with local Salvadorans. He was one of several U.S. nationals who managed their mobility through bouts of self-imposed house arrest. Like Frank, Andrés Meranda, 35, was also dependent upon remittances from the U.S. He eventually attained a job at a local call center, but he preferred not to socialize with the other employees because he believed they could not be trusted. Andrés minimized his social visibility in El Salvador by locking himself up in his apartment, smoking marijuana, and practicing art whenever he was not working. "I don't even think," he said. "I just stay in my room, listen to music, and draw."

Other U.S. nationals monitored their mobility more selectively. This was especially the case for individuals who had been in the country longer and had learned through direct experience and through the grapevine which areas were safe and which presented potential danger or surveillance. Since they were not familiar with their surroundings at first, U.S. nationals often learned which places to avoid the hard way. Ernie Lovos shared that he learned to avoid "places like ghettos" after he was attacked. He explained,

In the beginning I wouldn't come out like this because it was—I was told that it would offend people. But slowly, as I started learning the culture, I saw, I can go to places like this. I could jump on the bus and go to [the local shopping center]. But I won't go there every, all the time...And you would not go to a low-income places like the ghettos...I cannot go to see the street that I was born on...I can't go in there, I can't go in there because it's gang infested. And there's kids that grew up there but I can't go in there...I got jumped...you just got to watch out where you're going. And what you do. And what you say.

Carlos Pérez, 30, recounted a similar story of learning to avoid a neighborhood he also referred to as “the ghetto” in San Salvador. The gatekeeper for this interview, Tomás, was also a U.S. national and was Carlos’ close friend and co-worker. They both participated in the music scene of San Salvador by sharing their insights through consciousness-raising rap. They were less inhibited in their physical mobility in San Salvador than other U.S. nationals. Still, Tomás had already learned to avoid particular neighborhoods and was surprised Carlos had ventured into one to meet a “girl.” When he heard Carlos’ story, Tomás seemed to indicate to his friend that it would be wise not to return. He was subtly helping Carlos manage his mobility.

Carlos: Yeah, this village that I went to...it’s hot. They call it hot because there’s a lot of drugs. I drove a car there. I was picking up a girl. These guys were standing on the corner and they were like “what are you doing here?” I stood there for like ten minutes. But then they approached me. “I’m just here picking up a girl.” And he said “I don’t like you. Get out of here.”... And I said “come on, take it easy, bro.”

Tomás: That’s crazy! I’m trying not to—I try to avoid any possibility to be in those places because of *that*. I don’t know...

Carlos: And he said “get out.”... And he—fuck!—he kicked in my side door! ... And she jumped in the car. And this guy approached me with a rock. He was gonna throw it on the car, but he didn’t do it. He didn’t throw it. But there’s these places.

Katie: So you just left? Have you been back?

Carlos: Well! Not in that area, not that far, because I was deep in that area, in that village. But probably right on the outside. There are some girls over there! Some friends!

Tomás: But that’s what I’m saying.

Carlos: But I haven’t really gone any more.

Public spaces most U.S. nationals felt safe included commercial shopping malls, fast food and casual chain restaurants, and small independently owned “mom and pop” restaurants. Some avoided public transportation, but many felt safe riding on the buses to get to work or to visit family or friends. Yet even those spaces presented obstacles they were forced to physically navigate around, like surveillance and questioning by police and security officers. Most

deportees could not avoid or did not wish to hide from or physically maneuver around every potential threat. Thus, many adopted another strategy, *strategic covering*, to help manage their spoiled identities (Goffman 1963). To hide any visible markers of deportee-ness they altered how they presented their bodies. Some deportees who had shaved their heads in the U.S. grew out their hair upon return. Some exchanged their baggy clothes, shorts, and t-shirts for slacks, long-sleeved shirts, and button down dress shirts they considered more acceptable to mainstream Salvadoran society. Those that preferred not to completely change their style regulated it to the “backstage.” But when they moved outside of the relative safety of their houses and familial networks, they donned long-sleeved shirts, collared, or turtleneck shirts. Some U.S. nationals also wore sunglasses to avoid potentially contentious contact with others in public spaces. An exchange between Ramiro and Ricardo highlights some of these ways of covering.

- Ramiro Most of the time I dress this way. When I go for an interview I go with my suit and tie and everything. And I go clean.
- Ricardo Yeah, you got to hide them tattoos.
- Ramiro I comb my hair different so they can’t tell that I’ve been over there. I mean, that I have been deported. What I tell them is that—
- Katie And your Spanish?
- Ramiro Mine is just like Salvadoran.
- Ricardo Normal, normal; yeah, you’ve got to be normal.
- Ramiro Yeah, you can’t have that Mexican accent no more.

Covering was a perceived by most deportees as a relatively easy and inexpensive way for them to hide their identities when they deemed necessary or appropriate. As Ernie Lovos explained, wearing a tie and a long sleeved shirt indicates that “you’re neutral, you’re civil, you’re civilian.” Changing their attire could not, however, of addressing the more pressing problems visible tattoos invited into to their post-deportation lives. It is for this reason that several U.S. nationals and other deportees with tattoos had tattoos removed. Gabriel Cortez, 38,

provides an example. After being actively involved in gangs in both the U.S. and El Salvador, but after having his children Geyes was ready to transition to an inactive status. To do so, he needed to more visibly and permanently distance himself from gangs. Tattoo removal was an important step in this process. Gabriel said:

Yeah. I took them off. There's a program over here there's a program over here with, umm, Misterio Soledad, Misterio Soledad Publica and they give you like—well, well, actually you have to give them like ten dollars you know for each session and they give me like four sessions...and I took them off...it's clean. It's like it gets like the real skin. There's nothing... and people that knew me they're like "you had tattoos right?" And I go "yeah"...I don't want no proof...I don't want my kids to be like "daddy what is that?"

Many U.S. nationals resisted removal of their tattoos. Tattoo removal can be expensive and, when it is free, it is often tied to social service programs with requirements. Some deportees are unable to fulfill these requirements because of work, the location of the program, and other obligations. Giovanni complained that participation in the program he knew about required him to miss days of work. It was also in one of the "hottest" parts of San Salvador where gangs were prevalent. If he were to remove his tattoos he would have to risk his life by entering a neighborhood otherwise he preferred to avoid. Many U.S. nationals, including Giovanni, also reported resistance to tattoo removal because of the meaning they associated with the markings. The U.S., or at least their experience of it, had been literally inscribed on their bodies. To remove their tattoos was thus akin erasing parts of themselves. It was a symbolic suicide of sorts.

The case of Andrés Meranda is indicative of this type of resistance to tattoo removal. Andrés was always an artistic person. In the U.S. he painted cars with colorful designs and he had artistic tattoos "all over my body." The only tattoos that were visible, however, were the names of his three children, which he proudly displayed on his neck. He lamented that his children were young when he was deported and, as time passed, they were beginning to un-know him. In El Salvador, Andrés had been stopped and searched by police officers over 35 times. He explained that "I could be sweeping my front porch and they still gonna get down and ask me

what are you doing?” In spite of this harassment—or perhaps because of it—Andrés resisted tattoo removal. The children’s branded names on his body represented his refusal to passively acculturate into mainstream Salvadoran society and as important reminder of the life to which he hoped to reclaim in the U.S. The case of Andres is also interesting because he opened an informal “tattoo shop” in his house in San Salvador. He tattooed “middle class” persons he met through his colleagues at the call center. This activity supplemented his income, provided him an outlet for his artistic talent, allowed him to stay safe in his home, and helped foster an emergent culture of tattoo acceptance in Salvadoran society.

A final strategy deportees employed was to establish new families in El Salvador. Many U.S. nationals found new romantic partners and had more children. This often occurred after they severed romantic ties or got divorced from partners and spouses abroad. It also sometimes happened without their partners’ knowledge. Sometimes U.S. nationals found spouses and had children for the first time. Regardless of how the new partnerships emerged, finding a partner, having children, and starting a family in El Salvador marked the moment U.S. nationals changed the way they perceived Salvadoran society. They were no longer living for themselves, but for their kids. They tried harder to avoid gangs. They employed more coping strategies to survive. They were more willing to accept low wage labor if it meant supporting their families. Ultimately, they were more willing to accept El Salvador as a site of social belonging—a home—even if they also maintained longings to someday return to the U.S.

Such was the case for Antonio. After he was beat up by gang members at the beach, he clandestinely returned to the U.S., where he reportedly lived a “calm life.” He worked as a welder, spent time with his parents and in his church, avoided gangs, and saved a substantial sum of money. He planned to continue living in the U.S., where he was happy. However, in 2006, he

was apprehended and deported again for illegal re-entry. In detention, he fell in love with a woman who would eventually become his wife and the mother of his two children. The couple was deported together. Rather than risk federal incarceration by returning to the U.S., they decided to build a life together in their country-of-origin. If El Salvador was to become their home, Antonio needed to employ multiple coping strategies. He requested a loan from mother in the U.S., which he used to purchase a house. He secured employment in a call center, which provided a sustainable wage. He also covered the tattoos on his arms with long-sleeved shirts. He said, “well, when I leave, anytime I go out the door, I always put on a long sleeve shirt. I just don’t want problems. I don’t like the cops around me. And, especially the gang members, they are crazy. They are very crazy.” There remained three visible tattoos that could not be covered with clothing, so Antonio went through the process to remove them. The erasure of his former attachments, as signified by his tattoos, was no longer optional. It was necessary for him to protect himself, build a sustainable life for his family, and create a sense of home in El Salvador.

CHAPTER 8

Living and Leaving *La Vida Loca*

As the last chapter highlighted, deportee identities are often conflated with gang members in El Salvador. This is especially the case for deportees who grew up or otherwise spent significant time in the U.S. and for those who carry the markers of presumed gang membership, like tattoos and an urban style of attire described as “baggy.” However, this image is only partially rooted in reality. The deportees interviewed for this dissertation reported an almost unanimous desire to avoid gang life after deportation; and most of them were successful in their endeavors. Of the 100 persons interviewed, only fourteen reported any sort of affiliation with gangs after removal. Four of the fourteen claimed “indirect” affiliations, meaning that they were forced to commit crimes by active gang members living in their neighborhoods or their primary peer groups were composed mostly of active gangsters. As such, only ten percent of the sample claimed to ever have an ‘active’ status in El Salvador. Such numbers suggest that by far the *minority* of Salvadoran deportees become involved gang life after removal from the U.S.

The purpose of this chapter is to track the post-deportation trajectory of deportees into and out of gang life in order to more fully assess the deportee-gangster stereotype. In the first section, it describes the process by which deportees at-risk for gang memberships successfully avoid entry, highlighting the importance of social support networks. In the second section, it unpacks the factors contributing to gang entry for those persons who do become involved. The third section discusses some of the experiences of deportees within gang life, including the ways they claim to influence gang culture in El Salvador. The final section turns toward an examination of the process by which active gang members attempt to transition out of the lifestyle and the challenges of doing so for those who became highly entrenched in gang life. The

chapter as a whole aims to complicate overly deterministic assumptions about both deportees and gang members in the Salvadoran context, while also emphasizing the importance of embeddedness or belonging in predicting post-deportation trajectories.

Gang Avoidance

The deportees who appeared to be most at-risk for entry into gangs after removal were individuals with gang histories prior to their initial emigration from El Salvador and people with gang histories in the U.S. Such persons had already been socialized into gang life, so it makes intuitive sense that they might return to such a life after a life-altering event like a deportation. However, of the thirty-one individuals who were reportedly involved in gangs in the U.S., only two reported that they intended to go back into gang life after deportation. For the other twenty-nine, deportation represented not only banishment from lives and families constructed in the U.S., but a chance at a new beginning free from crime and violence. Most of them had been incarcerated for years in the U.S. and said they wished to avoid jail in the future. Deportation permitted a change of context that could, under the right circumstances, re-direct the lives of these individuals in more positive directions. Elias Guillermo, 28, explained his perspective,

‘I was kind of glad. Just kind of-of glad of coming to here because I didn’t wanted to be in jail no more. It was pretty long. Well, kind of a long time, right...I just wanted to—I wasn’t thinking of what could happen to me. I was just glad that I was coming back. I didn’t care if it was gonna be ugly. I just said I wanna go back to El Salvador...I just wanted to be free....I wanted to try to have another, a different, life. I didn’t wanna have the same life I [was] used to.

Ensuring such new beginnings within the Salvadoran context necessitated that those with gang histories in the U.S. distance themselves from local gangsters. They accomplished this discursively in their interviews in a number of ways. A common tactic was refuting the presumed link between deportee and gang identities, or discrediting the deportee-gangster stereotype. In an interview in 2008 Ricardo Delgado, 38, claimed that in El Salvador “if you see the news, most of

the people that get busted, the gang members from here, like 95 percent, they are from here.” Ramiro Díaz, who was interviewed with Ricardo in 2008, chimed in, “yeah they ain’t from over there [in the U.S.]” In 2011, Rolando Escobar, 21, also deflected the blame for the expansion of Salvadoran gangs away from deportees. He said, “they always say it’s the deportees’ fault that there are gangs here. But that is not true anymore. That’s the stereotype. That’s what the news says. But, it’s not true. Most of the gang members here are people from here. The ones that get deported like us, we stay away from it...We just avoid them.”

Former gang members also claimed that the risks of involvement in local gangs outweighed any potential benefits. They compared their perceptions of Salvadoran gangs with those in the U.S. and overwhelmingly concluded that in El Salvador gangs were “a whole other beast.” The traumatic history of the war, normalization of violence in poor families and communities, and hyper-marginalization of impoverished youth led to a situation in which, “it is basically the poor killing the poor.” Ramiro Díaz proclaimed that “true gangsters” in the U.S. would not “like” the gangster life in El Salvador. He said, “This is like a cheap life. They go around asking for money doing stupid things killing people for nothing! And, over there, if we do that, we do it for a reason. I mean, if we kill somebody, we do it for a reason.” For many deportees, gang membership should not only provide a sense of solidarity and purpose, but a means to financial mobility. In El Salvador, most former gang members explained, it was not possible to attain that kind of income as a gang member. According to Ramiro:

In the U.S. I used to make around 500 dollars in a couple of hours selling dope...we used to make a lot of money in our street...300 or 200 you used to get in one sale...over there if you want money, you can get money. Right here you can’t do that...If you’re a gang member, what can you expect here? Nothing. It’s just stupid if you get into it.

Many deportees who had been in gangs in the U.S. also claimed that gang culture in the Salvadoran context was inferior to U.S. gang culture. Frank Costa, 27, immigrated to the U.S. at

age three and eventually became entrenched a gang in Los Angeles. For him gang membership in the U.S. was a means to attain the American Dream. He said, “look, everybody’s American dream is to have a house, a car, having kids, and having money... I used to do robbery and stuff, but most of the time I would do it to support my ass.” In El Salvador, gang membership could not promise economic sustainability, let alone mobility, so he preferred to avoid them. Frank considered himself a “machismo kind of type guy” who was proud to have friends in the U.S. that “know how to fight and like to fight.” In El Salvador, though, he saw gang members as desperate and weak. He said, “I don’t get into that gang member stuff. It’s not my type to get on the bus and start charging people a dollar. If you look at it, that’s weak.”

In Frank’s estimation economic desperation in El Salvador resulted in a lack of style, a diminished sense of loyalty, and an inability to use violence judiciously, characteristics he considered the hallmark of “real” gangs. Like other former gang members from the U.S. who refer to local *mareros* as “thieves,” a category of persons wholly distinct from themselves, Frank expressed that “gang members here are *not* gang members. These guys, they can’t even dress. They don’t got no style... Gang members here, they resent society. Pretty much they are the fools that grow up in the lower-ass projects.” Because of the desperation such persons faced, Frank claimed that “they are two faced and will sell you out for 100 dollars...and four-fifths of them will kill you. They’re dangerous like that.” It was for these reasons that it was not worthwhile for Frank to be involved in local gangs. To do so meant compromising the elements of the more ‘authentic’ gang culture he held in such high regard. He concluded by saying, “I prefer getting a simple job here and see what I could do until I get out of [El Salvador].”

Other ways in which deportees distanced themselves from local gangsters involved their presentations-of-self. Like the coping strategies employed by U.S. nationals for generally, former

gang members altered their appearance and monitored their mobility. They avoided certain neighborhoods, wore attire that covered their tattoos and made them look like more ‘mainstream’ Salvadorans, and removed visible tattoos. Such tactics were helpful in displacing the stigma of gang members, but they were incapable of filling the economic and emotional needs the population needed fulfilled if they were to avoid gang life in the long term. Many of those that were most successful in gang avoidance had sources of financial and emotional support readily available through their local and U.S. social networks. They usually had a steady stream of remittances and local family members who provided them friendship and helped them find jobs, external supports. Many of them also took it upon themselves to find employment in call centers or in low-wage jobs the local labor market, sometimes to provide an extra source of income for themselves—and almost always when they had local children to support.

Over time many former U.S. gang members came into contact with one another, usually through call centers. Some of them, like Andrés introduced in Chapter 7, resisted forming friendships in order to protect themselves. Others took advantage of the ready availability of a social support network of persons with similar life experiences. They established friendships that, over time, snowballed into cognizable groups or networks of deported gang members from the U.S. who were resistant to entering gang life in El Salvador. Victor Figueroa, 32,—a highly active gang member in the U.S. and former leader of a major 18th Street clique in El Salvador—confirmed the existence of this population of deportees in his narrative. He said, “there’s deportee-gang members here in Salvador and they gangbang. But there’s also a group of deportees that do not gangbang. They stay away from all that because the way they gangbang down here is not their style.” When asked if this group of former gang members has established a

sense of solidarity, Victor confirmed that they did and then he added, “but they do not have solidarity with the with the gang members deportees that are here gang banging.”

This population of former U.S. gang members was referred to by a handful of other deportees by the title of *Sureños*. In Southern California the *Sureños* are an infamous multiethnic prison gang composed of loosely connected and often rival street gangs that pay homage and provide labor to the Mexican Mafia. In El Salvador, members of this group claim to not be involved in criminal activities, but just like in prison in the U.S., they put aside their former gang rivalries in order to cultivate a sense of solidarity that breeds affective support. Miguel Rivera, a former U.S. gang member in the U.S. who avoided gangs in El Salvador and was committed to helping other deportees cope after deportation, further explained:

We call ourselves *Sureños*. We say—we get along with each other even if we don’t get along over there. We treat ourselves like if we were in prison—that we gotta—we get along. If they are in gangs here we don’t [get along] but if they somebody who been deported and if they belong to another neighborhood even if we don’t get along over there we can get along here. I mean we treat ourselves like if we are in the joint prison.

Precursory ethnographic evidence of the existence of the *Sureños* was observed in the home of Mauricio and Mateo, two U.S. nationals who were interviewed for this dissertation in 2008. Miguel, who was a gatekeeper for this project, introduced me to the brothers. By the time their interviews commenced, three of their deported friends who worked at the call center arrived. By the time they finished their interview, a group of fifteen deported U.S. nationals who worked in the same call center were entertaining themselves in Mauricio and Mateo’s garage. They were drinking beer, watching American football, playing ping pong, and sharing stories of lives past and present. The group of friends did not formally refer to themselves as *Sureños* in my presence, but Ramiro Díaz, who was interviewed at that time stated, “all South Siders, we all get along. When we meet each other we get along pretty good.” And, at least on the surface level, they exhibited the characteristics described by Miguel.

Three years later, in 2011, an interview with Carlos Perez, 30, revealed a similar phenomenon of deportee solidarity. Carlos was a U.S. national without a gang history who worked in a call center. He said that in the call center he did not observe “gangster-gangster, like pure gangsters. I don’t see them.” However, he did say that “in the call center you’ll find the deportees that are mostly used to be like gangsters...but they are not looking to be coming and to play that role anymore. They probably learned from being in jail or whatever.” Presumably he was referring to the Sureños and others groups of deportees like them. Carlos continued, “then there’s guys that are more like us. We like music, culture, art, weed (laughs).” Carlos claimed that he and friends were involved in the Salvadoran consciousness-raising rap scene. They frequented the beach, nightclubs and bars, and the occasional strop club. Like the Sureños I presumably witnessed in 2008, Carlos and his friends who were deported from the U.S. also enjoyed hanging out with one another after work. He said:

We have barbeques and, you know, go out for drinks, even football. We talk about the games. Or we can go ahead and go into a house and watch football games. So it’s pretty nice. We continue with whatever we grew up with over there. Especially those that have been a long time over there, living. You come back here and you meet people that were over there. Like, sometimes you see people talking in English. You know that’s ‘cause they were over there and they likely work in a call center ... It depends the scene and all that. But I mean, we continue all that, you know, we the culture, with the habits that we were doing over there.

Groups like the Sureños and the deportees befriended by Carlos remember and try to re-create aspects of their former lives in the U.S., forming what Coutin (2007) called “little pockets” of the U.S. in El Salvador. Those ‘little pockets’ are certainly imperfect copies of what their lives were like in the U.S. In the case of the Sureños, the establishment of an imperfect replica of their former culture serves a positive function. The group unites not necessarily to facilitate criminal activity, but to establish an informal social support network in a context that is otherwise quite hostile to their physical presence. It helps keep them away from lifestyles they consider problematic for both themselves and for Salvadoran society. As long as groups of

former gang members like the so-called Sureños continue maintain their original intended purpose or blossom into more formal groups that advocate for the needs of both deportees and gang members, they can foster a positive form of social capital that has the potential improve, rather than diminish, their life chances in the long run.

Gang Entry

For many deported persons, the process of deportation facilitated their transition out of gang life. They engaged in a process of constant comparison that allowed them to see that gang life in El Salvador is a considerably more dangerous endeavor with less potential financial incentive than it was for them in the U.S. Many of them had also reached an age where they were ready to establish families and they wanted to provide their children households free from crime, drugs, and violence. The individuals who were successful in this endeavor did not transition out of gang life alone, however. They had access to social support networks and institutions that allowed them to feel at least partially embedded in mainstream society in spite of their deportee status and criminal histories. They relied on the financial support of family members in the U.S. and extended family in El Salvador. They found employment in call centers that allowed them to meet other deportees with whom many of them formed friendships and informal social support networks that helped them avoid gang life. Not all persons with gang histories, however, were successful in avoiding gangs in El Salvador upon return.

Interestingly, the pre-deportation narratives of those who were successful and unsuccessful at avoidance were remarkably similar. Both groups were mostly composed of U.S. nationals who experienced multiple iterations of violence throughout their lives. Members of both groups either had no memories of El Salvador or shared stories of brutal violence that

occurred during the civil war and their migratory journeys. Both groups grew up in mostly poor neighborhoods and attended schools plagued by racial tensions. Both were drawn into gangs in the U.S., where they were socialized into a culture that used violence to attain fellowship, respect, commodities, and social status. Both groups were also largely deported for gang-related activities. When they returned to El Salvador most persons from both groups claimed, at least in their interviews, that they wished to establish new lives free from violence.

The similarities between gang-avoiders and gang-entrants highlight the fragility of post-deportation trajectories. It is conceivable that many of the gang-avoiders could enter gangs and many of the gang-entrants could leave them, or at least transition to an inactive status, if presented with the right circumstances. The difference in circumstances appears to depend largely on the degree to which they were marginalized post-deportation. Both populations were highly stigmatized, but they had differential access to stable support networks, especially in the form of family ties and non-gang-affiliated peer groups. Persons who lacked such networks were more likely to turn toward the familiarity of gang life to recapture a sense of solidarity, power, and status that had been lost during the process of removal. In a country that alienated them, they found the streets to be the place where they felt most ‘at home,’ at least initially.

The following three vignettes illustrate the life trajectories of three persons who entered gangs after deportation in El Salvador. Their stories are representative of the ten persons who considered themselves as active gang members at some point after deportation. The other seven individuals will be sporadically introduced throughout the rest of this chapter.

The Case of José Guerrero

José Guerrero migrated to the U.S. at the age of 7. He remembers living with extended family as a child because his parents had already arrived in the U.S. His childhood was a happy time in the sense that there was enough food and there were plenty of children to play with, but he also remembered “getting his ass kicked” by his grandparents who cared for him. José emigrated in 1979 to reunite with his parents. He did not witness armed conflict directly, but as the war was looming, it became increasingly dangerous in his neighborhood. He heard gunshots in the evening and being told to lay down on the floor. He also recalled that the quickest way children from his neighborhood could reach school was to pass over a bridge traversed by the military. He recalled how “they used to come and execute people, throw them over the rail, no the bridge, and to the railroad tracks, and will the train go by them the cars just flew by and, you know, they could easily be injured, run over.”

José grew up in Southern California. His household was “like a dictatorship.” His mother was physically abusive toward his father, a man who José claimed was a hard worker, but was often drunk. The relationship between his parents was on and off. At one point they separated and the children were taken away from their father. José’s dad eventually “came begging” and his parents—who were previously only accompanied—got married. Family relations did not improve after the marriage, though. José’s father had many women on the side and he used to “pick up women off the street with me in the car.” His dad taught him “it’s the thing that men did.” And his mother was “worse than my dad in regard to beating us, you know.” She would give him “really severe beatings,” experiences that contributed to his “hatred of everything.”

School was “a whole different scene,” but it too was something for José “to hate.” He remembered being picked on by bullies because he could not speak English very well. In 4th grade he had his first fight, which he claimed was “a decisive moment” in his life. A group of

bullies had cornered him on the street and were teasing him in English. They stole a paper airplane he had made, crunched it in front of his face, and started laughing. He snapped.

And that's when I lost it. You know, I just, I just crunched my fist—and actually I was so angry, I just, you know, I just went off on this kid. And I just stood next him and swung at him like that, and busted his nose, and his mouth, you know. So, he was in shock, he fell to the ground and I jumped on top him and I just swinging and swinging on him, and blood gushing out of his nose, and mouth, and everybody else was just shocked and I remember at the same time I was screaming and crying, you know, like “porque, why, why, why!”

Beating up the bullies in 4th grade was the moment he first “let out” all of his anger. It was also the moment he learned that whenever someone hurt him, “all I have to do is punch them in the mouth and they’ll stop. That’s the lesson that I learned right there, you know. A punch in the mouth will shut somebody up real quick.” Later on, after he moved to South Central Los Angeles, he found a group of mostly “Mexican kids’ who ‘didn’t give a damn about what anybody said, you know, and I liked that.” He liked that they were “going against the system...fighting everybody off by playing, by acting macho, by acting crazy, you know and I liked that about them.” It was through these friends that he was introduced to a Salvadoran who was part of the Mara Salvatrucha Stoners 13. José stated hanging out with the gang, doing drugs, listening to heavy metal stoner music, and engaging in some criminal activities. After MSS 13 evolved into Mara Salvatrucha 13, José became a runaway and was jumped into the gang. He remembered ‘feeling free’ for the first time in his life because he could “doing anything I wanted.” He became highly entrenched in the gang and eventually rose through the ranks. After going in and out of juvenile and county correctional facilities, he was sent to state prison for Grand Theft Auto and was deported to El Salvador.

When José returned in 1994 he was 22 years old. He said, “I didn’t want to have nothing to do with the gang anymore... By that time I’d gotten tired of it. I was saying, ‘damn is this gonna be me, coming in and out, in and out, my whole life—or I am going to end up with life in

prison. I really don't want to.” José believed, like so many other U.S. nationals with gang histories, that “being deported was gonna give me an opportunity to be away from my neighborhood.” He wanted to see El Salvador as a tourist would. “Everybody talked about El Salvador and all these tourist places that I have never met, you know.” Unfortunately, when José was actually deported, he “didn't know how to get away from [gangs].” When he arrived at the airport there was no one waiting for him. The first night he broke into his father's abandoned home, squatting there for the evening. He and he realized “damn, I'm over here alone.” The second day he went to find his aunt, his only contact in the country. She told him that some gangsters who “probably heard rumors” that he was coming back, were looking to kill him.

José's second night in El Salvador was spent sharpening ‘an old rusted machete, and just sharpening it all night, saying, “tomorrow I'm gonna gangbang in El Salvador, and it's like fuck!” The next day the gang members returned and José threatened them with the machete. He recounted the story,

I jumped out with the machete, and I was with a muscle shirt, and I had tattoos around my arms, and fingers, you know. So, I didn't look so peaceful, you know, and I...asked him, “where you from?” And before I realize it, you know, I was speaking to him in English, and I realized that he couldn't understand...and then I asked in Spanish, and he just took a second to answer, and then he said ‘MS.’ I said, “MS?” And then the other guy was trying to see if he could jump in and I said “don't move, just stay there man, you know, just stay there. If not, he's dead, and you're next.” So, he just stood there, but I knew that I had jumped to point where I could reach both them, you know. So, I said, “you got a new tattoo?” And he said, “yeah.” “Well let me see them.” So, he raised his shirt and I saw his little ‘MS’ right there, and I said, “can you read man?” I said, “can you read my chest? ‘Cause I have Mara Salvatrucha across my chest, right. Said, “can you read this? Can you read this?” and I had MS 13 right here, “can you read this?” I had an MS right here and another MS right here. Ant I had [a] hat that said “MS13.” I said, “What the fuck, why are you fucking with me man? Coming over here and threaten me like this with my tía! You know, what the fuck!” So, I started going off on them, right, and he apologized, you know...Somebody had told them that I was from 18th Street, and blah, blah, you know. So, I told them, “alright get the fuck out here,” you know, “and don't come around here fucking with me again.”

José hardly had a chance to recover from that night's events, when the next day, approximately fifteen local youth came to his aunt's house. Instead of threatening José, they introduced themselves and asked him to jump *them* into MS-13 because he was, after all, an

“original” member of MS-13. José said he needed to have another “original” certify their entrance in the gang so he asked them to wait. The next day he went to San Salvador and found some other deportees from Los Angeles who gave him a gun. He complained that there were “all these guys all claiming MS, but nobody jumped them in. What the hell, you know?” The other deportees gave him permission to start his own clique of MS-13 in his aunt’s neighborhood and José went back and “beat the shit out of them.” Only a month after his arrival, he had already become a local gang leader. He had “soldiers from the neighborhood” guarding him with “two grenades.” He said that “they looked at us like idols.”

The Case of Victor Figueroa

Victor Figueroa migrated to the U.S. at the age of four after his uncle was murdered by the Salvadoran military for his suspected involvement in the guerilla. Like many other U.S. nationals with gang histories, one of Victor’s earliest memories was a traumatic event. During his migration to the U.S. at least seventeen persons were packed into a truck when his cousin was killed. The cousin was “hanging on the side of the truck and when we turned the curve, a big ‘ole rock slipped from up and killed him.” Victor remembered that he “saw him, that his head was split open. And, um...we stopped by a little lake and we buried him.” After paying their respects, the next morning the family “took off.” They traveled through the mountains and walked through the desert for a few days. Just as they were preparing to cross into the U.S., however, they were caught by immigration officials. Victor said, “I remember when we were gonna cross into the United States, the immigration got all of us...they busted all of us.”

Victor eventually obtained political asylum and permanent residency in the U.S. He attended school, where he learned English quickly and earned “mostly As and Bs.” His mother

worked two jobs to support him and his siblings, so she was rarely around to supervise the children. His older brother struggled at school and soon became involved 18th Street. Victor remembers that, when he was in middle school and his brother was in high school, the brother “would bring over his homeboys and homegirls into the house.” They friends would drink beer, smoke marijuana, and sniff cocaine. By the time Victor was eleven, he had already developed a curiosity for drugs. He remembers that when his brother wasn’t looking “I used to run out and I used to grab the beer and I used to drink...and one time he left a little joint of marijuana and I grabbed it and I smoked it and it made me all stupid.” By thirteen years of age, Victor was prepared to follow in his brother’s footsteps. He remembers “looking to buy marijuana...and on the weekends I used to go and I used to have people go and buy me beer and things like that.”

Victor dropped out of high school in 9th grade and, like Giovanni, and started stealing cars for 18th Street. He went in and out of juvenile hall several times. After AWOL-ing on more than one occasion, he landed a correctional facility in the California Youth Authority for four years. Prior to prison, he claimed that his gang activities were not racialized. Prison, he explained, is where is learned about racial tensions for the first time. He said, “I learned how to hate Chinese people and Black people....so, instead of rehabilitating me and changing me, the system...it corrupted me.” Victor’s time in CYA was an experience that ultimately elevated his status in 18th Street. When he was released, he was warmly welcomed back into gang life. He said:

I came out and people from my neighborhood, they told me, ‘oh, you’re finally out. Here’s a car, here’s some dope, here’s some money, here’s a gun and...I earned a name for me because I was one of the best car stealers, and besides that, uh, anybody who used to talk crazy to me, uh, I would go off on them. I wouldn’t hesitate. That’s what earned me a lot of respect.

Victor was deported in 1998 at the age of 22 after being convicted for a domestic abuse offense. By this time, he was tired of gang life and he stated that wished to avoid gangs in El

Salvador. Though he was covered in tattoos from head to toe, he preferred to “start a legitimate business” after deportation. Once he was in El Salvador it looked like he was on track to potentially achieve this goal. He lived with his aunt, who he said agreed to house him as long as she continued to receive remittances from the U.S. After 8 months of support, however, Victor’s mother could no longer afford to send remittances. He said “my mom couldn’t help her out no more so she kicked me out.” Victor was already “mad” because he was “deported to a country that I didn’t know nothing about it and it’s an ugly country.” The moment his family support system broke down, however, was the moment that his potential for reform was shattered. He said that being kicked out of his aunt’s house “is what broke the glass—that’s what made me explode totally.” With no place to live, no work experience in legitimate labor markets, and no alternative support network, Victor immediately took to the streets. He quickly found his “homeboys and homegirls” and “started gangbanging.” He said, “I went crazy here because I was so mad, so I started taking it out on the other guys...I started going crazy, killing, robbing, and stealing, doing what the typical gang member does to survive out on the street.”

The Case of Giovanni Bonilla

Giovanni Bonilla migrated to the U.S. at the age of 5 in 1980 when the civil war was brewing in El Salvador. His parents were divorced and he never got to know his biological father. In the U.S. he grew up in a Christian home and had generally good relations within his family. He attended elementary and middle school in a predominantly white farming town in Washington state. It was there that he first began to develop an identity as a “rebel.” He remembered getting in fights in school with white boys he claimed to be jealous of him because white girls were attracted to him. It wasn’t until high school, however, that he became involved

in gang activities. Giovanni's family had moved to Seattle, where he attended school with Chicanos and Blacks, types of people with whom he never before had contact. He joined a club at school called 'La Raza Club' with fellow Latinos. The club engaged in fundraising activities, like selling tacos at soccer games, to support activities it sponsored at school, like parties for Cinco de Mayo. Eventually, the "normal high school club" transformed into a gang called the United Latinos. Giovanni explained the process of gang formation, saying:

We used to go to football—I mean, soccer—games to cheer for the team. The other Black and Asian gangs, they started not liking us. Sometimes when our team won, or something, they got mad. They started waiting for us in the parking lot, you know. They started talking and stuff. So they we got rough with them too. We got tired of being harassed. So we got—we formed United Latinos, UL. That is when we started beefing in school and outside of school. We used to go to their schools and shoot them and stuff. You know, normal gang things.

Giovanni remembered how in the 1990s in the U.S. it was "trendy" to be in a gang. "You see all those rap videos and the gangs and you want to be down." To be a gangster meant "you were the shit." Giovanni became obsessed with gang culture. "All I cared about was money, my low-rider, and females." He became addicted to drugs, becoming self-processed "junkie." Giovanni moved in and out of the juvenile justice system and group homes so often that prison became "normal." Relations within his family eventually deteriorated and he started living on the streets. He said, "I became just being in the streets. Out in the streets. They became by home." By the age of 18 or 19, Giovanni was jumped into MS-13. He said "I became an MS member because I am Salvadoran." Perhaps ironically, being in MS was also his way of "becoming American." Once he was a full member of MS, Giovanni's criminal activities became more serious. Like a few of the deportees interviewed in this dissertation, he was primarily in the business of stealing cars. But he was also involved in gangbanging and the event that led to his removal was a drive-by shooting. Giovanni remembered, "Every day we used to go shoot fools. Killing... We used to go kill fools. Drive-bys. I got caught up in one of those shoot-outs."

When Giovanni was deported in 2002 he had family to return to in El Salvador. His with his cousin, who was a deported Salvadoran national interviewed for this project. He received remittances from his mother on a monthly basis to help him buy food, assist with utilities, and pay for gas for a car he shared with his cousin. Giovanni reported that “at first I wasn’t interested” in joining a gang and it seemed like he was on track to start a new life free from violence. Giovanni heard through his cousin that call centers were hiring deportees, so he went to apply. Unfortunately he did not have the computer skills necessary for the position. He said it was going to be 500 to 600 dollars to register for the course he needed to complete and he did not have that kind of money. With call center employment—and the solidarity among U.S. nationals it could provide—temporarily blocked, Giovanni turned toward the streets. He said, “I like being on the streets. I am a street person. So I joined [MS-13] here.” Boldly sporting his tattoos and his gangster attire, Giovanni “went to a *colonia* where MS is.” He found local gangsters and told them “hey I am from MS. I am from over there in Seattle.” The gang members accepted him immediately. He “went out and did things you aren’t supposed to do here, out killing and stuff.” Giovanni said that entering the gang was like going “home” and taking his anger out on 18th Street was his way of fighting against “the system” that made his life so painful.

Transitioning out of Gangs

Gang membership provided deportees who entered them a source of status, respect, and purpose in spite of the tarnished identities they maintained in mainstream society. It also was a lifestyle full of peril and consequence with little socioeconomic reward. Deportee gang members became the targets of vigilantes and police forces and the objects of surveillance by security forces. They were arrested, incarcerated, and beat up by police officers. They were threatened,

beat up, and sometimes shot or stabbed by other gangsters. They also committed violent crimes and endured criminal cases that brought shame and additional financial hardship to themselves and their families. They participated in all of this in part to survive and in part because gang life was still at the core of their identity. However, usually in their late twenties to mid-thirties, most of them were ready to settle down, form families, and find legitimate jobs free from gang activities.

Former gang members claim that though not impossible, it is incredibly difficult to transition out of gang life, especially for those who are highly entrenched and are well known within their own gang and by their rivals. As such, one of the primary tactics employed by gang members in this study was flight, or re-migration to the U.S. Both Ernie Martínez and José Guerrero were early founders of cliques of MS-13 in El Salvador, positions that afforded them high social status in their milieus. Still, both re-migrated to the U.S. José went back after about a year, stating that, “the thing was that I wasn’t over there, I never went down there to take that on. I never went out there to the intentions of me getting involved in all that stuff...and after being there I saw the reality of it, and it was about survival.” Ernie was happier than José to take on the role of a leader of MS in El Salvador but, like José he was dissatisfied with the meager earnings garnered by local gang members. He attempted to enter the U.S. a total of six times and was deported from Mexico or the U.S. each time.

Several other deportee-gang members also returned to the U.S. because of the risks to their lives. Richard Vasquez, 35, became highly involved in MS after removal. He was stabbed eight times in the head and nearly died from the trauma, remembers being chased in a bus by a rival gang member who was threatening to throw a grenade at him, and spending time in a local prison filled with members of MS 13, many of whom were facing life sentences. He went back

to the U.S. “‘cause I aint got no family, I got almost killed, and I had nobody to carry me.” When he returned to the U.S., he went to his homies and he asked for permission to remove some of his tattoos so that he could find legitimate employment to support himself. He was granted permission to transition to an “inactive” status and was in the process of removing some of his visible tattoos during his interview. He claimed, “I’m a *marero* to the fullest, you know what I mean. But see this is one thing, I’m always gonna be from MS, no matter what happens, anywhere, from MS till the day I die.” But, he also said that he “can’t go back and erase my life now, but...I can just know what I’ve done and just change it.”

Like Richard, several deportees were in the process of transitioning to the so-called “inactive” or “calm” status. Cuetzpalin, 38, was a U.S. national who migrated to the U.S. at age 3, became heavily involved in a gang in Pomona, CA, was imprisoned and held in solitary confinement for 10 years, and was deported to El Salvador, where he lived for a few months and then returned to the U.S. While in prison, he kept himself sane by reading and re-claimed the indigenous identity of his family. When he returned to the U.S. he struggled to avoid his old life. He went back to his old neighborhood, but discovered his friends were engaged in similar activities to those that got him deported the first time. He decided “not to go back” to his neighborhood and was in the process of establishing a life free of criminal activity. He found employment at a gang prevention organization and volunteered at a cultural center promoting indigenous culture. He said, “I don’t consider myself an ex-gang member. I just consider myself an inactive gang member...Because *ex* meaning that you would have gone over there and gotten the crap beaten out of you because you no longer [belong] to that [gang], you know. *Inactive* meaning that I don’t participate in the activities, but I am still welcome down there because they know me; because of the reputation that I was able to build.” He continued, “I walked away from

the lifestyle, but not from the people. You know those people are like the people that I grew up watching – and they watched me grow up.”

Other individuals who had gang statuses in El Salvador refrained from re-migrating to the U.S. This was either because they feared the journey through Mexico, which has grown increasingly more dangerous over the years, feared being incarcerated for illegal re-entry to the U.S., or because they were in the process of forming new families and identities based in El Salvador. Such persons who were interested in leaving gang life adopted Cuetzpalin’s strategy of moving toward inactive gang statuses. Giovanni Bonilla, introduced above, was one such person. Giovanni became deeply involved in Salvadoran gangs, but in 2007, a year before his interview, he “did something” that cost his mother “15,000 dollars.” He spoke with fondness about his mother, who was a woman who “through all of this, she is still sticking by my side...and I am tired of seeing my mom suffer.” And he admitted “I messed up, I am now realizing, you know, that it is not all about [gangs]...you can say, the way I think now, I said, man, I want to be *somebody*. I want to have more kids in the future. I want to settle a family. If I am going to do it here or there, I better start now, because I am getting older. I ain’t getting young.”

Transitioning to inactive statuses was not, however, a decision gang members made in a vacuum. They had come into contact with an organization that understood their struggles, provided them refuge and food, and offered them the social support and services necessary to facilitate a successful transition. In El Salvador one such organization is called *Alcance Victoria*, or *Victory Outreach*, an Evangelical Christian organization catering to drug addicts, alcoholics, and gang members in San Salvador. Several gang members claiming inactive statuses reported that the leader of the organization, who they referred to as “the Pastor,” was a former gang member who regularly visited prisons in El Salvador to offer friendship and fellowship. Several

of them also commented on the arrival of the former gang member-turned Christian evangelist, Nicky Cruz to El Salvador. Both the Pastor and Nicky Cruz modeled to gang members open to their message that it was possible to rebuild new lives, even if they had become deeply involved in gangs. Ernie Martínez described how these men instigated his decision to become inactive:

Oh! Because when I was doing my time, Nicky Cruz was gonna come. Nicky Cruz. Didn't you ever hear about him? He's a Puerto Rican that got involved in gangs with the Mau-Maus and Black Diamonds up there in New York. The Pastor, he gave in to the Devil and he got—he had been a killer. He been a *ladron*, a drug addict, you know. But he became a Christian. He's a Pastor. He got in different countries. He has like [the Pastor at Victory Outreach] has. Like an Army Salvation, like that. And they come from, to the prison to preach. And with him came some, like five or ten guys that came out from different gangs that they came out from prison to show us that Jesus Christ can change our lives. And he gave the opportunities to do it, you know.

Other gang members from the U.S. and in El Salvador heard about Victory Outreach in El Salvador through word-of-mouth. Antonio Portillo was first introduced to the organization in 1992, prior to his deportation. His experiences helped him “become Christian” in prison. Once he was deported, he “ran into a friend on the street and I seen him totally different. He was like, ‘hey, I got some news for you.’ And I was like, ‘what's up?’ ‘Why aren't you going to the hood no more?’ He gave me a flyer and the bible and said this is where I am hanging out now and told me to come to the church. There was a bunch of ex-gang members, ex-addicts. And he said I would like it. So, I ended up going to that church and I really loved it.” Like Ernie, Antonio reported that hearing the testimony of Nicky Cruz and other inactive gang members “really impacted my life...I was like, man, if he can do it, anybody can do it. And that's what really got me into going to church and mainly trying to do what is right for the Lord, you know.”

Victory Outreach served several important functions for deported gang members. It modeled to them, in a way that respected their life histories, that an alternate life was possible. It was provided the essentials they needed to survive—housing, food, and assistance locating employment. It provided a space and place where people leading challenging lives could come together, share, and learn from each other. It also provided them a new purpose in life, helping

them focus less on their gang rivals and more on understanding the messages embedded in the Bible and serving “the Lord.” These functions help fill the void that gang members likely feel as they try to distance themselves from their former lives. Because humans are social animals who need the support of others, the absence of spaces like Alcance Victoria would make it substantially more difficult for those seeking reform to accomplish their goals.

Christianity also served an instrumental function for gang members. Gabriel Cortes, 38, was an inactive gang member who was heavily involved in gangs in both the U.S. and El Salvador. He was also one of the founders of the organization, *Homies Unidos*, which was created in the 1990s by returning U.S. nationals with gang histories to help new arrivals with gang histories from both MS and 18th Street adjust in El Salvador and to work toward the prevention of local gangs more generally. Gabriel had distanced himself from Homies over time, but became involved with the work of the Pastor at Alcance Victoria. He explained the importance of the role of “testimony” in the lives of gang members trying to become inactive. In order to be spared vengeful violence from their gangs, it was necessary that they not only avoid renouncing their gang, but demonstrate through their words and their deeds that they were living authentically reformed lives. He recounted how he was questioned by an active member of his gang about the degree to which his Christianity was authentic and not a cover for a secret life.

He told me straight out “I think I’m gonna have to umm investigate, do some investigations about you” “Sure, you could do it whenever you want anytime you want and there’s nothing – I’m not hiding anything” and there’s a saying in Spanish “El que no la debe no la teme” “If you don’t owe anything there’s nothing for you to fear” Right? So I told him you know “Shut up” “El que no la debe no la teme” Right? So he’s like you know “okay” “So, with all respect you could do whatever you want. And I’m gonna keep on coming over here and you can search me all over and you’re gonna find out that I don’t have anything just a bible and a bunch of soap, toilet paper and things that I need”

Upon his return to the U.S., José Gurrerero eventually transitioned to an inactive status. He formed the first brand of Homies Unidos in Pico Union, Los Angeles. The organization focuses on gang prevention and intervention. The organization was secular and José struggled

with his own faith because his mother, who whipped him until he bled, was a Jehovah's Witness. Still, he argued, faith or spirituality, he claimed, can be an incredibly useful tool for "reforming" their lives or "letting go of violence." As such, "we encourage any type of spirituality here in the organization because many people seek religion, you know." Like gang membership, though, José said that inactive gang members can 'become really entrenched in it to the point that they feel that religion is what's keeping them alive.' Such was the case for many deportees interviewed in this dissertation who creatively weaved the rhetoric of "God" and the "Lord" throughout their post-deportation narratives. For many of them, their religion—and the communities of "brothers" associated with it stepped in for the positive social support networks their families, places of employment, peer networks or the state might otherwise provide. Their churches became "home-like" spaces where they could let go of the preoccupations associated with low levels of social embeddedness in El Salvador.

Unfortunately, as José indicated, religiosity—whether authentic or merely performed for instrumental purposes—does not protect all inactive gang members from their former lives. Regardless of their religious practices, deportees with deep affiliations with gangs continued to be haunted by their pasts. José was the subject of an F.B.I. investigation which sought—and ultimately failed—to prove he was using his gang prevention organization as a cover for his secret life as the lead "shot caller" for MS-13. Giovanni and others like him continued to be the target of police officers and to experience contentious encounters with local gang members. Bobby and others like him still begged and sometimes stole under the threat of force in order to sustain themselves economically. And Ernie was certain that, no matter whether he fully accepted God into his life, his history of violent atrocities in El Salvador would eventually bring about his untimely death.

Perhaps no other case highlights the continued vulnerability of inactive gang members than Victor Figueroa. Victor had been out of maximum security prison in El Salvador for two weeks when he was interviewed for this dissertation. His interview was the first time he left the safety of his residence. He was under the care of the Pastor at Alcance Victoria and thus had a place to live, food to eat, and an available social support network when he was ready to utilize it. During his interview, Victor was noticeably disturbed. For example, he was fidgety and he believed there to be snipers watching him from the roof of the hotel where our conversation took place. Still, he was cautiously optimistic about his future. He said it “could go many ways,” but that he planned to soon migrate to the U.S. in order to avoid risks to his life in El Salvador.

Shortly after I returned to the U.S., Victor was murdered. He had become too open about his inactive gang status. Rather than humbly and consistently performing Christianity, he boldly went into local secondary schools with an American, “Pastor Steve,” to share his life story. Like Nicky Cruz, Victor used his narrative to demonstrate to local youth the dangers of involvement in gangs and to encourage active gangsters to find an exit strategy. Such a strategy can be successful for certain people under the right circumstances, as is best evidenced by the activism of José Guerrero in Los Angeles. But for Victor Figueroa in San Salvador it appears to have ensured his death. He and Pastor Steve were cornered in an alley behind a local high school. Victor was shot 14 times; 7 bullets to the chest and the rest to the head. As Pastor Fierro said, “some members of his own group probably saw him as a traitor.” Victor had failed in his efforts to balance his inactive status with his activism and the results were fatal, as they often are for deeply entrenched gang members.

CHAPTER 9

Discussion and Conclusion

‘Instead of limiting criticism to the most unpleasant consequences of deportation, the very premise of deportation—that some people are worthy of inclusion while others are not—must be discredited.’

– García Hernández (2008)

‘Who is American? How am I not American? We are in America right now. It’s Central America, but we are in America.’

– Cristian Ordoná, 26

‘We are not like the people say. We have hearts full of emotion. We are people. We are human beings like everyone else.’

- Sergio Portillo, 28

Elastically bounded communities have long drawn upon metaphorical imageries of fraternity, familialism, and camaraderie to unify their members into politically and economically productive nations (Anderson 2006). This is epitomized by national monuments like the Statue of Liberty in the U.S. and El Hermano Lejano in El Salvador which symbolically extend a warm welcome to incoming foreigners and returning emigrants. This dissertation demonstrates, however, that not all persons are granted equal access to the rights and benefits associated with social and legal membership in either society. Through analysis of the experiences of Salvadoran migrants transformed into deportees, it demonstrates that the U.S. and El Salvador are as much exclusionary as they are inclusionary (see Young 1999). Favorable contexts of reception in the U.S. and of return in El Salvador granted for the acceptable coincides with the marginalization and exclusion of the undesirable (Kanstroom 2007; Zolberg 2006). Exclusionary practices not

only undercut idyllic notions of national unity, but have implications that impact the excluded and the members such practices were intended to protect.

The War on Immigration

The contemporary era in the U.S. is often characterized by its immigration expansionism. The passage of the *Hart-Cellar Act of 1965* replaced the highly restrictive and racial *National Origins Quota Act of 1924*, establishing a system that prioritized family reunification and skilled labor migration. Since then more people have arrived to the U.S. from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East than ever before. The law undeniably helped produce a dramatic increase in the size of the foreign-born population, diversified the demographic composition of the country, and helped shift the cultural, economic, and political landscape of the country. It also has shifted the incorporation patterns of immigrant and ethnic groups in the United States. Focusing solely on the elements and effects of expansionism, however, neglects the aspects of contemporary immigration law that have become increasingly restrictive, even draconian, in recent decades.

As García Hernández (2008:29) contends, “immigration law, as presently conceived, cannot be divorced from deportation law.” Indeed, the idea that the U.S. has become not only a nation of immigrants, but an indisputable *deportation nation*. Restrictive immigration laws and enforcement practices are deeply entrenched in U.S. history (Ngai 2004; Kanstroom 2007), but since the mid-1980s and especially after 1996 and 2001 the wars on drugs, crime, and terrorism have given way to a ‘war on immigration’ (Kanstroom 2012). A deportation regime—sometimes called the deportation machinery—has emerged that systematically identifies, apprehends, detains, and disposes of racialized and gendered bodies considered suspect or otherwise undesirable or indigestible to the imagined national community (De Genova and Peutz 2010). It

has been Mexican, Central American, and other low-skilled, impoverished refugee and migrant populations of color, like Haitians, that have been deemed unfit to permanently stay and become upwardly mobile in the U.S.

The contemporary war on immigration manifests in a number of ways. Funding for border and interior enforcement has radically increased, resulting in the militarization for the Southern, and increasingly the Northern, border. States and localities have become involved in the apprehension and detention of migrants. Immigration and criminal laws have become so intimately intertwined that an entire category of law known as crimmigration law has emerged. Removal has been deformed and is often expedited with little regard for the due process of migrants in order to reduce the costs of deportation and maintain record-setting detention and removal figures. The rights of legal permanent residents have also diminished such that non-citizens convicted of an arbitrary category of crimes known as “aggravated felonies” have few options for immigration relief. As the power of criminal and immigration enforcement has expanded, the discretion of immigration judges has been stripped, leaving them with little option but to deport apprehended migrants deemed categorically unfit for U.S. society often regardless of their ties to the U.S. or the context of return awaiting them in their countries-of-citizenship.

Such governmental practices are inextricably entwined with U.S. economic interests in the global economy. Restrictive modes of governing migration are occurring alongside transnational neoliberal economic practices, such as regional free trade agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA, intended to facilitate free flow of inexpensive goods and commodities across borders, or at least into the U.S. Such seemingly contradictory policy agendas actually work in tandem. They produce increased landlessness and uprooted-ness in Mexico and Central America, putting local populations at-risk for migration to solve the economic deprivation and associated

social problems, like high rates of street crime, they help produce. In the U.S., they help maintain a surplus of legally vulnerable and easily exploitable immigrant labor force. Unauthorized migrants are widely considered pliable, docile, and inexpensive sources of labor. They fulfill certain niches in the U.S. economy considered undesirable by native workers and are pitted against racialized and ethnic groups in other segments of the economy. Their deportability helps maintain the profits of corporate leaders and other profiteers—especially in the private detention and related industries—and thus serves an important function in the capitalist world order.

The war on immigration also serves a symbolic political function. It legitimizes the sovereignty of the state and the endeavors of its political actors, much in the same way the wars on crime and drugs lent credence to its advocates' political initiatives. Highly publicized workplace raids, gang enforcement initiatives, the militarization of the southwestern border, and even the publication of ever-increasing deportation statistics allow the government to give off the impression that it is “doing something” about perceived or real threats associated with immigration to the country (Andreas 2000). To “save face” despite contradictory empirical evidence, state actors engage in a game of “impression management” which requires them to perpetually reproduce stereotypes about immigrants and the means to control immigration. In reifying immigrants into “job stealers,” “gang bangers,” and potential “terrorists,” they advance their own agendas. Unfortunately, migrants' lives are damaged in the process, while the “problems” restrictionists aim to police are left not only fundamentally unresolved, but are sometimes exacerbated.

Collateral Damage

The lives of migrants and their family members are treated as its externalities or collateral damage of the deportation regime. Each year approximately 400,000 persons are removed from the U.S. and between 200,000 and 1,100,000 others are forcibly returned. From 2001 to 2010, over 2.7 million people were ordered removed by the U.S. federal government (USDHS 2011). This number skyrockets to 12.2 million once returns, or “voluntary” departures, are taken into consideration (USDHS 2011). U.S. immigration enforcement officials also process and managed an incredible number of deportable migrants. On any given day, ICE detains approximately 34,000 people in some 250 county jails and for-profit prisons in order to maintain the so-called ‘bed quotas.’ On an average day they process over 1,000 new individuals into detention facilities, detain more than 33,000, and electronically monitor another 16,950. In 2011 alone, they oversaw more than 1.69 million people in various stages of immigration removal proceedings (ICE 2011).

Because the plenary power doctrine grants Congress and the President the right to control immigration policy and because courts have historically treated immigration as a civil rather than criminal issue, immigrants undergoing removal proceedings are denied rights granted to citizens and individuals in criminal proceedings in the U.S. As Stumpf (2006: 392-393) states:

As a result, only the Due Process Clause protects noncitizens in deportation proceedings, and those seeking to enter the country have essentially no constitutional protections at all. Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights, prominent features of criminal trials, do not apply in deportation proceedings except to the limited extent that “fundamental fairness” requires them. The Fourth Amendment’s exclusionary rule does not apply in removal cases. Noncitizens in immigration proceedings do not enjoy the protections of the Eighth Amendment against cruel and unusual punishment. They generally do not have the right to appointed counsel at government expense or the protection of the privilege against self-incrimination. Nor does the Ex Post Facto Clause prohibit retroactive application of laws to immigrants in the deportation context.

Under such a system, contemporary migrants’ human rights are squandered, their families are broken, and their bodies are dehumanized. This is especially though not exclusively true along the U.S.-Mexico border. Widely known deterrence practices in the region have relied

on pushing unauthorized migrant flows into the most dangerous and deadly terrain, heightening the chance they will experience illness, injury, and death as migrants try to enter the U.S. ICE reportedly returns apprehended migrants claiming Mexican citizenship to the most deadly cities along the border in the middle of the night wearing their detention uniforms and carrying plastic bags that mark them as deportees. They commonly separate family members who were apprehended together, detaining them in separate facilities and deporting them into separate parts of the border in order to prevent their immediate re-entry to the U.S. It is most common that women and children will be separated from male members of their families. When they are deported along the border deportees often become victims of violent offenses or the prey of members of drug cartels who are known to rob, rape, and recruit them. In these ways ICE knowingly, and perhaps intentionally, deports people to their death.

Activists, scholars, journalists, and former ICE officials now claim that the *Customs and Border Patrol* has become a rogue, paramilitary-like, agency within the Department of Homeland Security. Former Chief of Internal Affairs at CBP and whistleblower, James F. Tomsheck, claimed that “the Border Patrol suffers from ‘institutional narcissism,’ a view that it is the premier federal law enforcement agency...which sees itself as above reproach and ‘constitutional constraints’” (Becker 2014). His comments emerged after recent reports highlighted the culture of corruption within the CBP. A recent Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request indicated that highlighting that 97 percent of all complaints of alleged abuse—including physical, sexual, and verbal abuse—against CBP officers went uninvestigated between 2009 and 2012 (Martínez, Cantor, Ewing 2014). Moreover, since 2010, 28 people “have died in violent clashes with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, [yet] no agent or officer has faced criminal charges—or public reprimand—to date” (Becker 2014). Tomsheck’s claims were

consistent, claiming that at least 20 percent of the Border Patrol engages in corrupt practices that could put the lives of migrants at risk (Becker 2014).

Migrants are also treated as collateral damage within the detention facilities. Persons entrapped within it are vulnerable to human rights abuses that are known to include long-term solitary confinement, inadequate medical care, and a lack of due process protections. Though detention was not specifically addressed in this dissertation, several anecdotal accounts by my interviewees demonstrated the injustices that occur in immigration detention. Not all deportees perceived detention as a negative experience. Some had been incarcerated for years and saw it as a transitional period out of confinement. Others reported that they were treated well by immigration officials. Though it varied by individual and immigration facility, many U.S. nationals felt they were treated like “animals” or “criminals” in immigration detention. Like Salvadoran nationals, their complaints included that there was insufficient food, the food was of poor quality, and the temperatures in holding tanks was too cold. Many persons did not understand their right to due process, arguing that they “signed the papers” that were given to them without legal guidance, translation services, or adequate explication of the documents. Several also complained of disrespectful and abusive guards and immigration officials. Several were placed in solitary confinement for contesting their treatment or fight back against other detainees who bullied them.

One particularly detention narrative of detention was shared by Pablo Día. Of all of the deportees interviewed in the sample, Pablo reported the greatest attachment to the U.S. He had “great love for the country.” He claimed to have never been discriminated against during his 30 years in the country. Immigration detention was the first moment he saw immigrants

dehumanized. He remembered that there was a guard that refused to speak to detainees in Spanish though she was capable. He recalled:

I saw like 20 people waiting for medication. And then she used to cuss them out. She used to call them bad words and treat them like animals; yelling and screaming with the bad words and worse! And cussing them out. And [those] guys they don't know! If they checked in Spanish, they could understand, but she was talking English and she knew Spanish! And, she didn't want to talk to them in Spanish because she didn't want to. Maybe she wasn't in the contract to speak Spanish. Maybe cause if she speaks Spanish she would be paid more? I don't know. But she speaks in English and the guys, they don't understand it! She says 'line up! Stay quiet!' In English! How they gonna know if they don't speak English?! So she just keeps cussing them out.

Pablo also claimed that two immigrants hung themselves on trees outside the dorms of the detention facility while he was there. The suicides prompted him to file a complaint. Out of fear of retaliation, he used the name and booking number a fellow detainee who had already been deported provided to him for that purpose. Pablo's handwriting was discovered and he was placed in solitary confinement for 15 to 20 days for the offense. Ever since his placement in the hole and especially after his removal Pablo suffered mental health issues, which included an attempted suicide via an overdose of pain medications. Reflecting on the detention experience that contributed to his reported depression, he stated:

They don't treat you like you are a human being. They don't treat you like you are a person. They just treat you like you are a dog, an animal, or a prisoner...I'm telling you that when I was up there a lot of things were happening in front of me. And, I made a report. I make a lot of complaints. I make complaints about the people that was hanging and, I mean, the people who was working there, taking care, the guards. And then I got in trouble myself. They put me in the hole for 15 or 20 days. And, it was a small cell. And they fed my food under the door because I made two complaints and it was against them. I been telling you is a disgusting, nasty place to live...It's real, real poor. Depressing. Nasty. The way the people get treated up there. And, like I said, people there, they been hanging themselves up and, just that they don't care.

The families of deportable immigrants are also the collateral damage of the deportation regime. A 2007 report by the Pew Research Center found that over 50 percent of Hispanics are afraid they or a loved one will be deported. Their lives are intimately affected by the inability of their partners to access the benefits of legal membership in the U.S. Since most unauthorized migrants live in mixed-status families, many of those indirectly impacted by deportability are

U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, and others in liminal legal statuses. Once immigrants are apprehended and removed, these family members can also be said to undergo a secondary deportation in which removal disrupts their lives even though they remain in the U.S. (Dingeman-Cerda and Coutin 2012). Some people actually migrate with the deportee, thus undergoing a de facto removal. Most, however, lose the physical presence and emotional and financial support of their spouse, partner, or child. They are often forced into the labor market and are compelled to provide remittances to their deported loved one. Hundreds of thousands of children, many of whom are U.S. citizens, are separated from their parents under current removal policies. Some go into foster care and many others are transformed into ‘at-risk’ youth who suffer from mental health problems and difficulties in school.

The lives of deportees are, of course, also profoundly altered by forcible expulsion from the U.S. Deportees are routinely sent to societies with which they have little familiarity and within which they are not truly welcome or are at risk for torture or death. They are also returned to places they once fled, places that are struggling with post-war transformations including rampant gang violence, and places that have limited opportunities for economic sustainability and mobility. When the context of return is hostile, deportees are forced into precarious political and economic existences. In the absence of strong domestic and international supports, deportees and their families must take on the responsibility of survival post-deportation. Such forced individual-level maneuvering is the hallmark of a capitalist world order that prioritizes open markets over human beings. Deported persons have become the quintessential subjects of neoliberalism. The findings presented in this dissertation relevant to the case of El Salvador support this claim.

Returning “Home” to El Salvador

This dissertation aims to bring complexity to burgeoning post-deportation research. It argues that ‘homecomings’ are embedded in the larger global economic order, but must be contextualized within the local and transnational social fields in which deportees find themselves. Their post-deportation experiences and responses should not be reduced to simplistic, linear explanations. Deportees are clearly subjected to state power and other repressive influences in their lives. They often live vulnerable or precarious existences, but scholarly accounts should avoid reducing them to pawns of the macro-structural. Deportees’ narratives are imbued with agency, so explication of the varied ways deportees experience return “home” should account for the control they exhibit in their narratives and in their lives, in addition to the structural factors conditioning their post-deportation lives. Different levels of post-deportation embeddedness and divergent post-deportation trajectories are the outcome of complex interactions between the personal characteristics of deported persons, the context to which the return, and their agentic responses.

In El Salvador, deportees return to a nation-state that has been deeply impacted by the transnational. The U.S. has long been involved in Salvadoran economic affairs, including purchasing coffee grown in the region, investment in infrastructure and manufacturing, textile, and other industries, providing development aid, and promoting a neoliberal ideology that spurred El Salvador’s involvement in CAFTA and the dollarization of the economy. They have also been involved in El Salvador’s political affairs, supporting the military-oligarchy that controlled the country in the 19th and 20th centuries, funding the violent repression of the civilian uprising that led to a brutal civil war throughout the 1980s, and advocating for heavy-handed policing strategies that increased oppositional identities in the region. Mass deportation of

Salvadoran nationals is the latest intervention from the U.S. Like those before it deportation has dramatic consequences for individual lives and for Salvadoran society more generally.

Each year approximately 17,000 to 20,000 persons are deported from the U.S. to El Salvador. The country prides itself, as is visibly insinuated by its national monument El Hermano Lejano, for the support of its migrant community abroad. However, adult deportees face a context of return that makes many of them feel unwelcome or unable to establish sustainable lives upon return. Progressive efforts have been made since the moderate-leftist Mauricio Funes was elected to the presidency in 2009 (Arnson et al. 2011; Mills 2012; Seelke 2013), but the country continues to struggle with poverty, unemployment, and street crime. In the postwar years the government has followed a neoliberal model of economic development (Velásquez Carrillo 2010). Since this approach has done little to improve inequality, deportees return to a highly stratified society that offers few well-paying occupational choices. Until the historic gang truce was negotiated in Salvadoran prisons in 2012, the government relied upon a zero-tolerance approach (Zilberg 2011). Their heavy-handed strategies exacerbated violence and contributed to the criminalization of the new American diaspora (Dingeman-Cerda and Rumbaut 2010; Zilberg 2011). Neither the U.S. nor the Salvadoran government has sufficiently invested in deportee reinsertion program. They have instead placed the onus almost entirely on deportees and their families. In doing so, they have also limited deportees' ability to exercise positive agentic behavior in El Salvador.

This study is the first of its kind to explicitly compare the post-deportation experiences of Daniel Kanstroom's (2012) new American diaspora, referred to here as *U.S. nationals*, with individuals who experienced less intensive acculturation into the U.S. prior to removal, referred to as Salvadoran nationals. My sample of *Salvadoran nationals* largely migrated to the U.S. as

adults for mostly economic reasons. They spent little time in the U.S. prior to removal, experienced relatively lower levels of acculturation to U.S. ways of life, and remained more connected to El Salvador while abroad than U.S. nationals. Upon return, they were aware of a stigma against deportees and they were afraid they might be perceived as failed migrants. This prompted many of them to rhetorically distance themselves from other deportees who perceived as potentially violent threats. Over time, however, they realized that they were not corporeally or culturally distinct from the local population. Local family and friends welcomed them and the general public demonstrated curiosity, indifference, or sympathy toward them. Despite this neutral or relatively positive societal reception, Salvadoran nationals almost uniformly faced precarious economic situations. Though poverty is on the decline, the postwar neo-liberalized economy in El Salvador offers this population few opportunities for sustainable employment. Many struggled to find jobs, survive, or support a family on the meager income their jobs provided. The economic struggles that they faced caused many members of them to consider clandestine re-migration to the U.S. in order to rectify their dire financial situations

U.S. nationals overwhelmingly experienced a negative societal reception. They typically migrated to the U.S. as children during the Salvadoran civil war of 1980-1992. They were socialized and established primary social ties in the U.S. When they were deported, they interpreted it as an exile or banishment from their homes in the U.S. In El Salvador, they returned as foreigners or strangers. Even if they had never been involved in gangs in the U.S. or had no intention of joining them in El Salvador, the visible and auditory markers of their “Americanness” resulted in a conflation of their post-deportation identities with those of local gang members, which made them feel marginalized. U.S. nationals encountered problems with police, gang members, and the general public. This negative societal reception led U.S. nationals

to change their appearance, monitor their mobility, and confine themselves to their homes, coping strategies that helped foster a sense of embeddedness in El Salvador. Forcibly separated from their closest family and friends, several also coped through excessive use of alcohol, drugs, and sometimes thoughts of suicide. Some engaged in “homemaking behaviors” by eventually found romantic partners, spouses, and had children, which helped them create “home-like” conditions in El Salvador. Most, however, continued to dream of returning to the U.S. to reunite with family and rebuild the lives they were forced to leave behind.

U.S. nationals faced a challenging economic context of return, resulting in initially low levels of economic embeddedness. A general lack of local social ties made it difficult to find employment opportunities, but once they did, they often encountered discrimination. Salvadoran employers refused to accept foreign educational credentials and references and asked them to take lie detector tests to prove they did not have criminal histories and take off their shirts to prove they did not have tattoos. Deportees were also reluctant to join the local labor market due to stigmatization and the low pay they were likely to receive relative to the U.S. Many remained dependent upon both the remittances their families sent from abroad and the housing and financial support of local extended family members.

The neoliberalization of the Salvadoran economy in recent decades presents some U.S. nationals an alternate opportunity structure for economic sustainability. Foreign-owned call centers consider them a preferable source of labor for customer service agent positions because of their bilingual abilities, computer skills, and cultural knowledge of the U.S. Deported U.S. nationals report that call center jobs are scarce and competitive, but if they can secure positions, they offer better incomes than those with working-class jobs. It is important to note, however, that even as deportees expressed gratitude for this alternate opportunity structure, they were

aware that their labor was being exploited; that persons with the same jobs in the U.S., while still also exploited, would garner significantly more income and stability.

A final set of deported persons in El Salvador examined in this study are those who became involved in gangs after removal. In contrast to the rhetoric that links deportee and gang identities, this sample of deportees suggests that by far the minority become involved in gangs after return. Those that did were more likely to be U.S. nationals who were involved in gangs in the U.S. However, all such U.S. nationals reported that they actively avoided gangs after removal because they disliked local gang culture, felt there was little economic benefit to their involvement, and wished to start fresh lives free from the insecurities that come with a life of crime. Though they were frequently targeted by gang members and treated as if they were gang members in Salvadoran society, most were able to successfully avoid involvement through covering strategies, by relying on the economic support of family members, and by working in call centers that established for some a sense of deportee-solidarity that shielded them from gang entry. Though collective activism among U.S. nationals and other deportees has not visibly emerged, some did begin to create and exist within ‘little pockets’—or transnationalized spaces—that resembled the U.S. and its culture. Such spaces provided a sense of “home” sensations that helped deportees avoid joining deviant networks that can foster similar feelings.

A few others were less successful in avoiding gangs. Such persons shared some similar characteristics, including witnessing violence during the civil war, growing up in racially divisive spaces in the U.S., having broken or poor relationships with their nuclear families as adolescents, and joining gang in the U.S. Some were drawn to gang life in El Salvador because it was a source of identity and a way of life to which they had become accustomed. Others joined because they had fragmented social support networks upon return in El Salvador. Several who

rose through the ranks of their El Salvador-based gangs quickly narrated that their involvement provided them a sense of power, control, and purpose over their lives which were objectively quite vulnerable. Many de-emphasized their criminal behaviors in their interviews, preferring to focus on how they have become the targets of the state and thus struggle to exit the life they have chosen. Some even reported that they used their positions of power in gangs to change the local culture away from vengeful violence and toward involvement in economic activities. Most interviewed for this project were actively trying to get out of gangs. Such persons demonstrated the difficulties of leaving a gang, claiming that their lives were at risk if they simply renounced gang life or tried to escape El Salvador. Others demonstrated that it is possible for some persons to leave gangs, so long as they can consistently and visibly demonstrate they lead a reformed, usually Christian, lifestyle.

This review of deportee trajectories in El Salvador ultimately highlights that most deported persons face challenges upon return. Deportees represent a highly vulnerable population of neoliberal subjects. Despite this reality, however, the population follows multiple pathways to post-deportation embeddedness or marginalization. Some persons, especially Salvadoran nationals without gang histories, attain relatively high levels of post-deportation embeddedness, at least compared to non-migrants. On the other hand, U.S. nationals and gang members report subjectively lower levels of embeddedness, feeling as though they are socially, economically, and politically marginalized. Though most deportees in both populations were able to survive in El Salvador post-removal—only one person in the sample was murdered, to my knowledge—most persons continued to engage in an ongoing assessment of whether they preferred to stay in El Salvador or whether their psychosocial ties to the U.S and post-deportation realities in their country-of-origin necessitated another attempted immigration to the U.S.

Several people had migrated, or attempted to enter, the U.S. multiple times regardless of the legal vulnerability that surely awaited them there. Such persons are drawn elsewhere out of a deep, inherently human, desire to establish and maintain a sense of belonging somewhere. Because of their socio-legal and economic vulnerabilities in both countries, though, they risk becoming a population Gmelch (1980:6) referred to in now-classic review of return migration literature, as “shuttle migrants” or “cultural commuters” who move back and forth between “home” and host societies never fully satisfied with where they are.’ The existence of such persons highlights that deportation law as it is currently conceived in the U.S. does not end the cycle of migration (Hagan et al. 2008), but does help build an underclass of extremely vulnerable, easily exploitable persons who must rely upon their own emotional resilience and social support networks if they are to establish meaningful and sustainable lives.

Transnational Implications

The legitimacy of the deportation regime rests on the assumption that once deportees are removed, U.S. society is effectively cleansed of unwanted or threatening migrants, the cycle of migration ends, and the purity of the homeland is preserved. Contrary to this view, immigration enforcement has historically done little to slow undocumented migration or prevent the return of deportees (Cornelius 2006). After Operation Wetback removed over a million people between 1954 and 1959, unauthorized migration continued (Johnson 2005). Likewise, after the passage of IRCA in 1986, undocumented migration grew exponentially (Massey et al. 2002). Mass deportation in the contemporary period also does not prevent deportees or new migrants from attempting to return to the U.S. (Hagan et al. 2008). Migrants continue to arrive because of inequality between their country-of-origin and the U.S., a demand for migrant labor in the US,

and the presence of family and friends abroad (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, and Pellegrino 1993). It has only been during periods of economic decline that undocumented migration has also considerably declined. In other words, though hyper-restrictionist immigration laws *are* effective in producing greater insecurity among undocumented populations, they do not, in and of themselves, solve the problem of “illegality” advocates of restrictionism claim they will.

Restrictive immigration-related laws have also historically been ineffective at preventing terrorism and reducing crime. Of the over 82,000 men registered and interrogated under the *National Security Entry-Exit Registration* (NSEERS) program between 2003 and 2011, tens of thousands of people were deported. However, to the extent that the public is aware, not a single person was convicted of involvement in terrorism (Anand and Schreiber 2012). Sociological evidence also finds that regardless of national origin immigrants commit crimes and are incarcerated at lower rates than US citizens (Rumbaut and Ewing 2007). During the 1990s, when immigration rose dramatically regardless of increased enforcement, there was actually a *drop* in levels of crime. Cities throughout the country with larger immigration populations also report lower rates of crime, including homicide levels (Sampson 2008). Since immigration seems to have a dampening effect on crime, these findings suggest that policies of mass removal may actually serve to *increase*, rather than decrease, national crime rates.

Deportation of persons who grew up in the U.S. combined with a lack of institutional support to facilitate deportee reinsertion exacerbates transnational social problems. Latino gangs are a largely products of U.S. society. Contrary to popular belief, MS-13 and 18th Street were born in Los Angeles. Their members fought against each other with excessive violence while also helping fulfill the U.S.’ demand for illicit drugs. Such gangs were later exported to El Salvador via deportation. Deported gang members entered a postwar society with an excess of

disenfranchised who were already loosely organized into localized gang cliques and had ready access to U.S.-funded civil war weapons. Some of these deportees helped form and grow MS-13 and 18th Street. Since then, and under U.S.-advised anti-gang policing strategies, these organizations have helped bring great insecurity to Central America. Rampant gang violence now works with longstanding economic disparity and socio-political insecurity to produce a refugee crisis, especially among children and women. Emigrants are fleeing El Salvador and traveling to the U.S. under conditions of extreme insecurity. Like during the civil war, they are in search of refuge from a phenomenon very much connected to, and arguably produced by, U.S. policies and practices. Once again, they face a hostile context of reception that will limit rather than capitalize on their inherent human potential.

Continued deportation, especially of persons with longstanding ties to the U.S., promises to contribute to the fragmentation of Salvadoran families across international borders. Such practices constitute a form of institutionalized violence that not only produces heartache and economic disorganization among such families in the short-term, but may contribute to social problems in the long-term. Just like incarceration produces numerous negative impacts on children of the incarcerated, deportation leaves children, many of whom are U.S. citizens without critical support of one of their parents. Many of these youth also end up in foster care. Such youth are likely to be transformed into at-risk populations who may form oppositional identities that do not advance, but problematically challenge nationalistic projects. As persons intimately affected by the deportation regime and the discourse, policies, and practices upholding it, their livelihoods are critical to discussions of reform.

Policy Recommendations

If the modern deportation regime cannot promise to reduce the transnational problems it purports to police and remove, its function remains ambiguous. Fortunately, Salvadoran deportee narratives and opinions point to ways the system might be reformed to more effectively and humanely manage migration. If the goal is to truly reduce undocumented migration, domestic and transnational gangs and street crime, and improve the lifecourse outcomes of populations of deported persons, it is necessary to move beyond symbolic policies and political posturing and address the root causes of these social problems. If this is done, it is likely that human lives will be improved and the U.S. and El Salvador will move closer to their aspirational self-image as a haven that cultivates the potential of immigrants and El Salvador as a welcoming environment for its forcibly returned expatriates.

To reduce widespread illegality, the sizable undocumented population living within the U.S. and the factors motivating large-scale undocumented emigration need to be addressed. An amnesty that provides a pathway to citizenship for these persons is recommended, especially for those who entered as children and have familial ties in the country. Quotas on legal entry from the Western Hemisphere and funding to reduce the large backlog that keeps people who qualify for adjustment deportable for years to decades should be increased. Courts should consider asylum claims on the basis of flight from gang violence and threats in Central America and other countries plagued by the phenomenon. The federal government and civil society should implement campaigns to raise legal consciousness in immigrant communities so that persons are aware of their rights, their vulnerabilities as persons living in partial legal statuses or outside of status, and any available avenues for their legalization and naturalization.

To reduce the negative effect of deportation on the people affected by it, the process must become more humane. The U.S. must reduce its reliance on the private prison industry.

Alternatives to detention being implemented on a small scale are significantly more cost effective for U.S. taxpayers and, as such, should be implemented for individuals who do not pose a substantial risk for society. Conditions in immigration detention facilities must be improved for those who must be housed in them; detainees should be provided adequate and sufficient food and be housed in comfortable conditions that respect their humanity and their right to family unity. To provide immigrants their constitutionally-protected right to due process under the law, anyone seeking adjustment of status or relief from removal should be provided legal counsel at no expense to them, as it is under the criminal justice system. Translation services should be required for individuals who do not speak English, especially as it relates to their legal case and concerns they raise regarding their treatment in detention. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Patrol, and detention facilities should be required to submit to ongoing external monitoring to ensure that they are responding to complaints against them, rectifying institutional cultures that permit or encourage corruption, and are upholding the dignity of migrants and other persons under their jurisdiction.

Current deportation laws and practices are in dire need of reform. Judicial discretion should be reinstated to allow judges to determine whether deportable immigrants can receive relief from removal on the basis of familial and other ties to the U.S., personal character, and conditions in the country-of-citizenship. Discretion should be available for individuals being removed for both immigration violations and criminal offenses, including those defined as aggravated felonies under IRIIRA in 1996. Judicial review should be fully implemented to allow deportees to re-open their cases from abroad. Out of respect for family unity and for the best interests of the children and other family members, a waiver should also be considered that

would permit deported persons to visit their family members they are forced to leave behind in the U.S.

The U.S. should take a more proactive approach to gang violence. It is documented in scholarly literature that gangs are the result of multiple layers of trauma and marginality inflicted on the lives of impressionable youth. Repression appears to heighten oppositional identities and prison exasperates rather than diffuses gang identities. More effective, but clearly more challenging, solutions to the gang phenomenon include investing in inner-cities with high levels of poverty and racial tensions to provide stronger educations and after-school activities for at-risk youth. Job training, economic opportunities, and affordable childcare that allow for sustainable livelihoods should be promoted for persons from these communities.

Gang prevention and intervention programs should be supported that work to increase inter-racial dialogue and otherwise reduce racial tensions and allow at-risk and current gang members to see that alternative lifestyles are available and attainable for them. Such programs should help provide a safety net and sense of solidarity outside of gang life to help persons successfully transition out of such lifestyles. The U.S. also needs to work toward decriminalization of minor drug offenses and reduce reliance on repressive anti-gang policing strategies and racialized corruption among police officers that reduces trust for authorities in at-risk communities. It also needs to reduce its demand for illicit drugs, a problem that not only inhibits the lives of those dependent upon drugs in the U.S., but also economically supports domestic and transnational gangs, drug cartels, and trafficking rings throughout the Americas and the world.

This dissertation also indicates opportunities for reform in El Salvador, and, by extension other deportee-receiving states. The context of return for deported persons in El Salvador is

characterized by a weak institutional framework for deportee re/insertion, a perception that deportees who grew up in the U.S. are threats to local culture and security, a history of zero-tolerance anti-gang policies that have targeted deportees, and a neoliberalized economy with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Each of these conditions can be improved. The Salvadoran state and media can support further research into the post-deportation trajectories of deportees and, drawing upon their findings, work to reframe the discourse around deported migrants, especially those who grew up in the U.S. and those who have tattoos. The U.S., international community, and the Salvadoran state and civil society can work together to develop an effective deportee reinsertion program that truly extends a warm welcome to its returning expatriate population. Such a program would provide or link deportees with housing, mental health and health services, and job training and hunting services in order to reduce the deprivation and sometimes desperation experienced by many deportees upon return.

The Salvadoran state can reform its anti-gang policies and policing strategies, ideally with the ideological support of the U.S. In 2012, a historic and highly controversial gang truce was negotiated between MS-13 and 18th Street gang leaders in El Salvador. This truce resulted in a year-long reduction of homicide rates never before seen since the widespread emergence of gangs in the 1990s. The truce signifies that gang members are capable of reducing levels of violence and crime. This dissertation presents gang member narratives indicating that gang life is not a preferable option for many persons involved in it and that many people are able to leave the life if they have support. The Salvadoran government, perhaps with funding from the U.S. which is invested in gang reduction in the region, can help prevent the growth of gangs and support alternative lifestyles for active gang members by reducing reliance on heavy handed *mano dura* practices and extending proactive *mano amiga* programs. Much like is being advocated in the

U.S., Such programs should work with leaders in gang invested communities to support their needs, build trust between authorities and disenfranchised locals, provide opportunities for at-risk youth, and help active gang members remove tattoos and transition to inactive statuses.

The final recommendation is the most challenging to implement but is also the most important. The current political economic model in the U.S. and in Central America is largely based upon a neoliberal ideology that prioritizes open markets over the rights and needs of people embedded within them. Free trade policies and disinvestment in social programs may increase overall GDP and help produce new jobs in certain sectors of domestic economies. But it also perpetuates socioeconomic inequalities including landlessness and poverty. It uproots persons, sending them on migratory journeys to urban centers and to the U.S. Without adequate safety nets, it forces people who may or may not have strong personal networks to fend for themselves. In these ways, it perpetuates the marginality of vulnerable populations, increasing likelihood of entering informal labor markets and criminalized subcultures. A more equitable economic arrangement would empower, rather than repress, human agency. It would allow all persons to establish sustainable livelihoods that also ideally hold meaning to them. Perhaps most importantly, it would allow persons not only the right to migrate and the institutional protections that allow them to do so safely, but the right to *stay*—and ideally invest their personal resources—into their countries of birth and citizenship; to truly make those places their homelands.

Limitations and Future Research

This dissertation ultimately challenges the notion that international migration can be adequately understood through sociological analyses focusing exclusively on incorporation into

receiving societies. It is a dynamic process that requires scholars to move beyond investigation of immigrant incorporation and transnational exchanges into a serious consideration of physical return. The dissertation focuses on the “exit-side” of U.S. immigration law, providing cursory qualitative evidence regarding what might be called the “deportee condition” and some of its variations. It urges policymakers in the U.S. and Central America to address the root causes of its social problems around migration and crime, rather than engage in political posturing that too often sacrifices the needs of the many for the interests of the few. Regardless of these academic and policy contributions, this dissertation suffers from several limitations inherent to analysis of vulnerable populations which should be addressed in future research.

This dissertation relies on a purposive stratified sample, which is a variation of a convenience or referral sample that draws upon select subpopulations of theoretical interest. Owing to the relevance of gangs in the Salvadoran context, it includes an over-sampling of people with gang histories. This may lead readers to the incorrect assumption that such persons constitute the majority of Salvadoran deportees. The sample is also biased against the stories of deportee youth, women, and elderly people. Study participants were mostly obtained through nonprofit organizations, so the sample biases also people who have at least indirect access to or actively seek out social services. As a result, the dissertation may systematically neglect the most successful and most vulnerable deported persons in El Salvador. Future research should continue to compare post-deportation experiences of different ‘types’ of deportees, including those presented in this project, but also extending to repatriated child migrants, women, rejected asylum seekers, and even voluntary returnees. It should also include analysis of the *process* of removal and the experience of immigration detention.

A necessary scholarly contribution would be made through a randomized sample that would track deportees from the point of detention, removal, or arrival and over time thereafter. To inspire future post-deportation research, this dissertation captured deportee narratives at one point in time. Some deportees had been back in El Salvador for months, while others had been back for over a decade. Such variation inhibited the type of longitudinal analysis that is necessary for accurately tracking lifecourse trajectories. A longitudinal panel study similar to the classic *Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study* (CILS) would be capable of moving past mere hypotheses about the long-term implications of deportation law (Portes and Rumbaut 2001 and 2006). It would systematically track those implications alongside transitions in deportees' lifecourses, providing much needed quantitative evidence in policy debates around immigration and removal law.

Finally, post-deportation researchers should spend more time ethnographically exploring the Salvadoran context of return, drawing upon local meanings and examining the dynamics within deportees' social worlds. It should also extend into other national contexts for the purpose of comparative analysis. National contexts with historically rich migratory, political, and economic ties to the U.S. and with high concentrations of undocumented and criminalized populations would be productive sites to examine. The Mexican, Guatemalan, and Honduran cases are especially important to understand since they send large numbers of undocumented persons to the U.S. and receive the largest numbers of deportees annually. Beyond these contexts, however, it would be fruitful for comparative purposes to explore contexts with fewer deportees and with more sophisticated institutional frameworks for reinsertion. A systematic evaluation of different models of reinsertion would be especially useful for states and organizations interested in implementing successful programs in their countries.

Each of these recommended future projects requires researchers to “remove national blinders” and enter the clandestine and vulnerable worlds many migrants and deportees occupy (Fitzgerald 2006). Such studies—though challenging due to time and resource limitations—promise to result in analyses that more accurately reflect reality for increasingly large and politically relevant proportion of international migrants. Hopefully such projects will challenge ineffective and inhumane state practices and, in doing so, help move the U.S. and other societies closer toward their aspirational values of inclusivity and equity.

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APPENDIX A

STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

Salvadoran Deportation Study

Case ID: D/F _____ **Pseudonym:** _____
Language: _____ **Date:** _____
Referral: _____ **Location:** _____

This first part of the interview is a questionnaire about the timing of certain major life events. I will ask you if certain things have happened in your life and when they happened. It is important that I get as much accurate information as possible. The life history chart is available to help you remember the order of events and the dates on which they occurred. Feel free to take as much time as you need and to use the chart to help figure out when things happened. The interview should take approximately 20 minutes. Do you have any questions?

General

Sex: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Age: _____
Languages: _____

Migrations

Where were you born?
City: _____ *State/Department:* _____ *Country:* _____

How many times have you migrated to the U.S.? _____
(This doesn't include post-deportation remigrations.)

In what year did you arrive to the U.S.? How old were you? What was your immigration status?

<i>Year</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Immigration Status</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What is your current U.S. immigration status? _____

In what year did you receive this status? _____

Through whom did you receive your status? _____

In what city, state or department, and country do you currently live?

City: _____ State/Department: _____ Country: _____

Deportation

How many times were you deported from the U.S. to El Salvador? _____

In what year were you deported? How old were you? Was this a deportation or a voluntary departure?

<i>Year</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Type</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Was it an immigration violation or criminal conviction? What was the crime? How long was your ban?

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Crime Type</i>	<i>Ban Length</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Did you remigrate to the U.S. after your deportation? _____

Education

What is your highest level of education? _____

In what countries were you educated? _____

In El Salvador, what was your highest level of education? What year and age did you complete this?

Grade: _____ *Year:* _____ *Age:* _____

In the U.S., what was your highest level of education? What year and age did you complete this?

Grade: _____ *Year:* _____ *Age:* _____

Did you ever receive a GED, diploma, degree, or other educational certificate? In what year? How old were you?

<i>Type</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Age</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Formal Employment

Have you ever been formally employed? _____

Are you currently formally employed? _____

What is/are your job title(s)? What type of company/organization was it? In what year did you begin and finish working there? How many hours on average do you work each week? What is your approximate salary?

<i>Title</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Salary</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Are you currently looking for (more) work? _____

Marital/Relationship History

How many times have you been married? _____

From what year to what year were you married?

Start _____ *End* _____

What is your current marital or relationship status? _____

In what year and country did you start your most recent relationship? How old were you?

Year: _____ *Country:* _____ *Age:* _____

What was/is your partner's the year of birth, age, and country of birth?

Year: _____ *Age:* _____ *Country:* _____

Did your partner migrate to the U.S? At what age? What is his/her immigration status?

Migration: _____ *Age:* _____ *Status:* _____

Are you still with this person? _____

If not, are you separated or divorced? _____

In what year did this happen? _____

Children

How many children do you have? _____

What are their ages, sexes, country of birth, and immigration status, and current country?

<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Parent</i>	<i>Type</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Are all of these children biological? _____
[If not, place "step," or "adopted" to indicate this relationship.]

Do all of your children share the same mother/father? _____
[If not, place a 1, 2, and 3 next to each child's information to indicate a different mother or father.]

Incarceration

Have you ever been involved in gang activity? _____

Have you ever been incarcerated? _____

How many times? _____

In what kind of facility were you incarcerated? For what crime? In what year? How old were you?

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Crime</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Age</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Salvadoran Deportation Study

This second part of the interview is meant to be more flexible and conversational in nature. I will ask you to elaborate on certain aspects of your life and to provide examples and stories whenever possible. Feel free to explore questions with as much or little detail as you feel comfortable. This part of the interview should take approximately 1.5 hours. Do you have any questions before we get started?

Pre-Migration

General

- Can you please describe the area in which you grew up?
- What is the economic context? Is it poor, middle class?
- What sorts of occupations do people do?
- Was/Is there violence there?
- Is there a unique history to the area that you can share?
- Can you relate your experiences to that history in any way?

Family

- Could you please describe in general what your family life was like as a child?
- With whom did you live?
- How large was your family? How many siblings did you have?
- How was the family doing economically? What were your parents' occupations?
- Did they both work or did someone stay at home? Who took primary care of you?
- In general, what was your parents' relationship like? Did they generally get along, argue, or fight? What circumstances made them argue or fight? Did this affect you in any way?

School

- Could you describe in general your experiences with friends at school?
- What were your friends like? What did you do for fun?
- How did you fare academically?
- Did you have any dreams about what you wanted to be when you grew up?

Employment

- Please describe in general your experiences with work.
- What types of work did you pursue in El Salvador?
- Did you make sufficient income? Why or why not?
- How much income did you make? What were your living expenses?

Marriage

Did you get married or have a partner before you left? If so, please describe that relationship and how it unfolded over time.

Children

Did you have any children before you left? If so, please describe that relationship and how it unfolded over time.

Civil War

Did the civil war affect you, your family, or your friends in any way (i.e. psychologically, economically, or politically)?

Does the war or its memory still affect you, your family, or friends in any way?

Migration

Why did you and/or your family decide to go to the United States?

Prior to arriving in the U.S., what did you expect to find? Did you see it as a place of opportunity, refuge, somewhere you were forced to go, or something else?

By what means did you travel to the U.S.? Did you go by plane, train, bus, coyote, etc.? Who paid for the trip?

With whom did you migrate?

Please describe the trip and any significant experiences on the journey. Did you run into any problems with immigration, police, bandits, or others?

Please describe experience of crossing the border. Where did you cross? Did you encounter any immigration agents? Was it overall an easy or hard trip?

Incorporation

U.S. vs. El Salvador

When you arrived in the U.S., did you intend to settle there or did you plan to return to El Salvador?

What were your first impressions of the country (i.e. the things you saw, the people you met, the way people treated you, etc.)?

If any, what sorts of similarities and differences did you initially see between the United States and El Salvador?

If anything, what did you miss most about El Salvador?

While in the U.S. did you ever go back to El Salvador to live or visit? Why or why not?

Did you maintain any economic, political, religious, familial, or social ties to El Salvador?

Were you always connected to the same degree or did it change over time? Why or why not?

Social Support

Please describe your process of adjustment in the U.S. What sorts of opportunities and barriers did you encounter? Did you overcome them and, if so, how?

What were your main sources of financial, emotional, and financial support? Did any specific individuals, groups, or organizations assist you?

Family Life

Describe what life was like with your family in the U.S.

With whom did you live?

In what ways did your family life stay the same and change?

Did your family members ever attain legal status? When and how?

Where did your parents work? How often did they work?

What was the nature of your relationships with your siblings and parents?

Was there any tension or were there any problems in the family?

Sometimes there are problems in migrant families as children become more acclimated through American culture and parents retain their native culture. Did you have any problems in the home because of this?

School

Please describe your experiences in school.

Did you have any dreams of what you wanted to be when you grew up? Did you try to pursue this?

If you dropped out, what led you to that decision?

Social Support Network

Please describe the nature of your U.S.-based social network. What sorts of friends and family did you develop in the US? How were those relationships?

Did you ever get involved in gangs? If so, what led you to get involved? How did your involvement affect your family life?

Were you ever incarcerated? If so, what led you to be incarcerated?

Describe your experiences in prison. How did this affect your family life and your connection to your neighborhood or gang?

Employment

Please describe your experiences working in the U.S.
Where did you work? How much did you get paid?
How were you treated by your employer and co-workers?

Deportation

Reasons Deported

Were you aware that you could be deported from the US?

Did you ever attempt to obtain legal status or citizenship? Did anyone inform you or assist you?

Did you ever discuss what the family might do to survive economically or psychologically if one of you was deported?

Did you have a plan of action or did you assume it would never realistically happen?

Please describe why – and the events that led you to be – deported.

Did you communicate with your family while you were in detention? How often? By what means? What were your conversations like? What sorts of plans were you making?

Detention

Describe your experiences in court and detention.

Did you have an attorney? Were you informed of the right to have an attorney? Did you try to appeal your sentence?

How long were you in detention? How were you and others treated in detention?

Did you go through the formal process of deportation or did you sign a voluntary departure?

Do you have a ban on your re-entry to the US? For how many years?

Hopes & Fears

Please describe how you were feeling in prison/detention about your deportation to El Salvador. Did you have any feelings, anxieties, excitements, or worries?

Did you view your deportation as a new beginning, a sentence, a combination, or neither and why?

Post-Deportation

Arrival & Adaptation

Please describe the day you were deported. Was anyone at the airport to meet you? Did you have any money? Did you have anywhere to go?

Was/Is El Salvador how you remembered it to be? Did/Do you miss anything from the US?

While in El Salvador, did you have/have you had problems with police or security guards?

While in El Salvador, [did you have/have you had] encountered with gang members?

Did/Have you joined a gang? If so, what lead you to join? If not, why and how have you resisted?

While in El Salvador, did you attend school or any training programs?

While in El Salvador, were you able to locate employment? Where? How much were you paid? How were you treated? (See below if worked in a call center)

Did you ever have problems finding a job? If so, what kinds of problems? If not, why not?

Effects on Family

Has your deportation had an overall positive or negative experience on you and the rest of your family? What has been the hardest part on your family since your deportation?

In what specific ways has the deportation affected your family? Please provide examples of how it affected your relationship to your spouse/partner/parents/siblings/extended family/fictive kin. Provide examples of how it has affected you, your family, and or your children legally, psychologically, economically, educationally, religiously, politically, and relationally?

Have these affects lessened or worsened with time? How and why?

In what ways have you, the kids, and your spouse/partner adapted to living life across borders? How do you cope? Has it changed over time?

How do you communicate with your family members? Has the means of communication changed at all over time? Have they ever returned to El Salvador to visited or live? Why or why not?

Does your family assist you in any way from afar? Do you assist them in any way?

Since your deportation the structure of your family changed at all? Have there been any romantic separations, divorces, or other reconfigurations? If so, how did these changes happen?

Remigration

Return to U.S.

Have you ever thought about or discussed with your family whether or not to return to the U.S.?

What were/are the benefits of returning or staying?

Under what conditions did you consider or might you remigrate? What holds you back?

Final Questions

Think about the word 'home.' What sorts of images come to your mind? Where are you located? Who are you with? Why?

Are you a representative of the United States, El Salvador, both, neither, or something else? Has this identity shifted through your experiences? In what ways?

Are you or is the Salvadoran or deportee community doing anything to change the problems associated with deportation and reintegration? Why or why not?

Do you have any recommendations to make the situation better for deportees and their family members?

Do you have anything else you would like to add?

That is the conclusion of the interview. [Provide \$20 incentive.] I would like to sincerely thank you for your time and wish you the best of luck. If you have any questions for me, you may ask them now. You may also contact me at any time using the email address provided on your copy of the informed consent sheet provided to you at the beginning of the interview.