

**To Spain and Back:
Changing Roles and Identities of Ecuadorian Female Migrants**

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Latin American Studies and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Ecuadorian migration to Spain expanded due to economic and political push and pull factors between the two countries. Through the feminization of migration, women came to represent approximately half of all Ecuadorian migrants in Spain. During the migration process, women who lived in Spain experienced reconfigured identities with respect to their roles as migrants, employees, wives, and mothers. Beginning in 2008, the economic crisis and rampant unemployment in Spain forced many Ecuadorian migrants to return to their native country. As women came home to Ecuador, they reconciled the migration experience with their transition back to Ecuador. This paper focuses on the migration and return processes for Ecuadorian women and examines the challenges and opportunities that females confront with respect to identity reconfiguration when they are abroad and when they come home to Ecuador. Additionally, this paper highlights to what extent public and private organizations in Ecuador provide opportunities for support for Ecuadorian women when they return from Spain. Analysis is based on qualitative research stemming from 24 interviews: eight conducted via internet with Ecuadorian migrant women living in Spain, ten with Ecuadorian migrant women returned from Spain and living in Quito, and six with representatives from Ecuadorian government offices and NGOs offering programs for returned migrants. This research emphasizes the need for readjustment support for returned migrant women to facilitate sustained empowerment throughout their return to Ecuador.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the courageous migrant women of Ecuador. These *Ecuadorianas* that I met during my field research uprooted their lives to travel to Spain in search of opportunity and have returned to Ecuador to start over. I thank these women for their generosity in sharing their experiences with me in order to give voice to the challenges and opportunities confronted during migration and return.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of my thesis committee. I want to thank Dr. Mehrangiz Najafizadeh (a thousand times over) for your guidance throughout the entire process. You spent countless hours helping me craft, reconfigure, and refine my thesis. You are truly an exemplary professor and I am forever grateful for your commitment to helping me.

I also want to thank Dr. Elizabeth Kuznesof who, from my first day in her class, has challenged me as a student. Your class, without question, “set the bar high” during my experience at KU and guided me in developing my thesis from its very beginning stage. I also want to thank you for your invaluable mentorship outside the classroom during my years here in Lawrence.

Thank you to Dr. Anton Rosenthal for your advice and insight with all of my ideas, class projects, and my thesis. Our conversations have always pushed me to think outside the box and view issues from multiple perspectives. From the instant I realized our “Quito connection,” I knew that you would be a wonderful resource throughout my graduate school experience.

Map of Ecuador



Source: "Ecuador Map." *Fundación Bolívar Education*

<<http://www.ecuadorvolunteers.org/amazon-coast/ecuador-volunteer-travel/ecuador-map.html>>.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Ecuador is the smallest of the South American Andean countries, situated in the northern sector of the continent, bordered by Colombia to the north and Peru to the south. It is divided into four distinct geographical regions which are the Galapagos Islands, *la costa* (the coastal region), *la sierra* (the highland region), and *el oriente* (the Amazon basin region). With a population that slightly surpasses fifteen million people, Ecuador's people are defined as a diverse pluri-ethnic culture. The Ecuadorian people are classified ethnically as seventy-seven percent *mestizo*, ten percent white, seven percent indigenous, and five percent Afro-Ecuadorian (Ecuador Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, "Censo de Población y Vivienda" 2012). The labor force in Ecuador is distributed with eight percent working in agriculture, twenty-one percent employed in various industries, and seventy percent working in the service economy ("Ecuador" 2012). In addition, many Ecuadorian citizens work outside the country as immigrants in Spain, the United States, and Italy. Ecuadorians living abroad represent ten to fifteen percent of the national population (Jokisch 2007). Ecuadorian immigrants have become such a significant group that the current Ecuadorian President, Rafael Correa, addresses Ecuadorians living abroad as the nation's "fifth region" (Margheritis 2011)Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011: 290).

Ecuadorian emigrants' places of origin, gender, and settlement patterns have changed significantly over the past 60 years. In the 1950s, lower-class young adult men from rural agricultural zones in Ecuador's southern highland region constituted the predominant Ecuadorian emigrant population (Kyle 2000). These men established migration networks and settlement patterns that concentrated Ecuadorians mainly in the New York region of the United States.

However, the late 1990s and early 2000s brought about an increased feminization of Ecuadorian emigration and a greater settlement preference for Spain rather than the U.S. (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). Additionally, female Ecuadorians from large coastal cities and the capital city of Quito represented a larger percentage of the emigrants than in previous waves. Ecuadorian migrant women in Spain transformed the traditional emigrant pattern and emerged as significant actors within the migrant population.

During the migration process, many Ecuadorian women have gained greater economic opportunities and have become empowered as household breadwinners. Through greater economic contributions to the family, some women have gained greater authority over household decisions and greater independence from their husbands (Arteaga 2010). When women make greater wages they increase their household status which enhances their authority and sense of empowerment. In this way, economic empowerment gained through employment abroad facilitates greater authority for migrant women in the household. For many female migrants, these advantages are maintained while they continue to work abroad. However, for returned female migrants, newfound roles acquired in the host country are not always transferable to their native country upon return.¹ Women reconfigure their identities to adapt to diverse roles that they must fulfill as migrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Similarly, women must also reconstruct their identity upon return to their country of origin where they, once again, take on further modified roles (Bastia and Busse 2011; Gaye and Jha 2011).

¹ In this paper, returned migrant defines an individual who has returned to their native country after migrating abroad with the intention of remaining in their origin country indefinitely without expectations of immediate future migration. Returned migrants differ from seasonal migrants who migrate between their native country and host country for specific periods of time with the intention of perpetual cyclical migration without permanent settlement in their home country.

Female migrants shape their identity through their experiences as women, wives, mothers, and workers during their time abroad and when they return to their native country. Ecuadorian returned female migrants must reconcile their experiences abroad with their reinsertion into various social networks. Returned migrant women undergo a reintegration process that occurs at the individual, family, communal, and national level.² While some women gain greater family authority and independence through migration, this empowerment is not always sustainable upon their return to Ecuador. Returned female migrants often reformulate their daily practices in order to adjust to cultural expectations in Ecuador regarding traditional gendered roles and responsibilities. Ecuadorian women returning home have to navigate their reintegration process within the patriarchal structures that govern various aspects of Ecuadorian customs and practices. Thus, returned female migrants in Ecuador constantly construct and reconstruct their identity throughout the entire migration and return process. This journey can either support or question cultural and social norms in Ecuador that govern behavior according to gender, which influences how women perform their roles within the household, family, community, and nation.

Research Question

Some Ecuadorian women have returned home because of economic and emotional tensions stemming from high unemployment rates in Spain and prolonged family separation. The return process for these women is a dynamic experience in which women must reconcile being “home” with their time spent abroad while they renegotiate their roles and identities being back in Ecuador. In this thesis, I examine the following research question: how do Ecuadorian

² The reintegration process refers to migrants’ transition when returning to their country of origin as they reunite with family, reestablish their household unit, reinsert themselves into the local economy, and reintegrate into their native country’s social life.

migrant women reconfigure their roles and identities throughout the migration and return process? By analyzing international migration as a comprehensive, multidirectional process, I examine how migrant women actively construct and reconfigure their roles in Spain and in Ecuador. By focusing on the experiences of Ecuadorian female migrants during their migration and return experiences, I expand understanding of how migrant women reconcile marginalization surrounding socially constructed gender expectations, but also find opportunities for economic and social empowerment (Bastia and Busse 2011; Gaye and Jha 2011; Ghosh 2009).

To address my research question, I first examine the historical evolution of the emigration process in Ecuador from the 1950s to the present, outlining major push and pull factors related to Ecuadorian migrant patterns. Second, I provide an analysis of contemporary Ecuadorian emigration to Spain and various factors influencing Ecuadorian women's multifaceted identities. Finally, using archival data and personal interviews, I explain the situation of the returned female migrants and their experiences with the reintegration process in Ecuador.

Literature Review of Ecuadorian Migration

In contemporary Ecuadorian migration scholarship, migrant women have emerged as primary actors. These women warrant research that analyzes their experiences in the country of origin and the host country. Female migrants have not always been the focus of research surrounding Ecuadorian emigration. Literature that analyzes the history of international emigration from Ecuador, from the 1960s through the 1980s, focuses predominantly on male-led independent migration to the U.S. (Astudillo and Cordero 1990; Kyle 2000; Miles 2004; Pribilsky 2007). David Kyle argues that the international migration of Ecuadorian men emerged from rural sectors in southern Ecuador to the U.S. in response to economic downturn and a

scarcity of employment (2000). These men migrated unaccompanied, leaving wives, parents, and children behind. Ann Miles's ethnographic account, *From Cuenca to Queens*, examines the reconfiguration of families left behind in the absence of the male head of household and chronicles how wives and children adapted to migrant households (2004). Furthermore, more historical literature focuses on the migrant men's experiences abroad in the U.S., the predominant destination for Ecuadorian male migrants, to highlight their new roles and responsibilities being away from the families (Pribilsky 2007). The initial waves of male migrants created a gender concentration in Ecuadorian migration studies, as revealed through the emphasis on male-led migrants and the absence of migrant women during the early time periods.

In the past 10 to 15 years, scholars have focused specifically on migrant women with expanded research on the feminization of migration (Arteaga 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Parreñas 2001; Pessar and Mahler 2003). Women have transformed from secondary migrants to independent migrants, leading international migration waves, often leaving family members behind, and no longer only following spouses to migrate abroad. The feminization of migration has increased as economic and political reforms in developing countries have caused an increase in female migration. The feminization of migration is most prevalent between sending countries in the global South and receiving countries in the North where female migrants are often concentrated in the domestic service sector (Dobner and Tappert 2010; International Organization for Migration 2012; Parreñas 2001). Neoliberal policies in the global South that decreased government funding towards social welfare programs inhibited women's ability to care for their households (Benería 2008; Pessar 2005; Sparr 1994). As a response, many women looked towards migration as an alternative to achieve greater economic stability.

Ecuadorian migrant women began to gain attention in international migration in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this time, many women travelled to the U.S. as secondary migrants to reunite with male family members who had settled abroad in previous decades. However, in the late 1990s, Ecuadorian women came to the forefront of international migration as primary migrants who led an unprecedented migration wave to Spain (Camacho Zambrano 2005; Camacho Zambrano 2009; Cuesta 2007; Gratton 2007; Herrera 2012; Ruiz 2002). Ecuadorian women who formerly made up a trivial percent of migrants came to represent half of all Ecuadorians living abroad. The feminization of migration emerged in response to the economic crisis in Ecuador and the demand for service workers in Spain, especially in domestic service (Beckerman and Solimano 2002; Bernardi et al. 2011; Dobner and Tappert 2010; Gallotti 2009). Literature surrounding Ecuadorian migration reveals the changing roles of Ecuadorian women as primary migrants and the changing roles of their families back home as they adapt to the absence of daughters, wives, and mothers (Acosta, López, and Villamar 2006; Camacho Zambrano 2005; Camacho Zambrano and Hernandez Basante 2009; Fresnada Sierra 2001). This process occurs in tandem as both parties adjust to the demands required by the migration process.

When migrants are abroad, many experience changing roles for men and women as compared to practices in the home country (Camacho Zambrano 2005; Dreby 2010; Fresnada Sierra 2001; Parreñas 2001). In this way, migration influences how men and women interact in the host country compared to cultural practices in the country of origin. Research that examines Latin American male and female migrants living in the U.S. shows how male migrants often undergo a decrease in authority due to migrant status, racial discrimination, decreased authority, and lower economic status (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Jimenez 2010; Pribilsky 2007). On the other hand, research indicates that Latin American female migrants in the U.S. often experience

increased authority (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Pessar and Mahler 2006; Smith 2006). Some migrant women acquire employment and contribute to household earnings for the first time in their lives. Moreover, females sometimes gain a greater public presence abroad; they have greater responsibilities outside of the home which require greater independence and they work in locations outside the home. English-language literature that analyzes migrant gender-specific responsibilities for Latin American migrants focuses predominantly on Mexicans and Central Americans living in the U.S. Scholarship on the migration of South Americans needs to be expanded in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of how nationality and settlement in host countries outside of the U.S affect the migration experience for men and women.

Male and female migrants adapt to fulfill various roles while living abroad. Men and women's migration also produces secondary effects for family members who have stayed behind in the country of origin (Bastia and Busse 2011; Camacho Zambrano and Hernandez Basante 2009; Lawson 1998; Ortuño 2009) . For women, female migration not only changes roles abroad, but through transnational household practices, female migration changes roles back home. Women who migrate without husbands and without children force families back in the country of origin to adapt to the females' absence. Women can also become transnational mothers and engage in different parenting practices when they are forced to be away from their children due to migration (Dreby 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). Throughout the process of migration, women undergo a change in their roles; this process results in a negotiation and reconfiguration of family practices in order to accommodate to the demands of migration.

The literature surrounding Ecuadorian female migration emphasizes the perspective of migrants abroad and migrant families left behind (Bertoli et al. 2011; Camacho Zambrano 2009; Camacho Zambrano and Hernandez Basante 2005; Dobner and Tappert 2010; Jokisch and

Pribilsky 2002; Pellegrino 2004). Camacho Zambrano and Hernandez Basante's work highlights the impact of female-led emigration on family members who stay behind in the cities of Quito and Guayaquil (2005). This perspective provides insight into the transnational consequences of migration for family members in Ecuador who must adjust their household responsibilities in the wife's or mother's absence. Camacho Zambrano's book *Mujeres Migrantes* analyzes Ecuadorian women's experiences in Spain with respect to employment opportunities and argues that female-led migration has caused a human capital deficit in Ecuador that inhibits economic development (2009). Camacho Zambrano conducted interviews with Ecuadorian migrants primarily in Seville and Madrid. Additionally, she carried out interviews with Ecuadorian female migrants in Ecuador who were visiting Quito temporarily during summer vacation. Camacho Zambrano's research focuses on the familial and economic consequences of female-led Ecuadorian migration, in addition to highlighting the perspective of migrants and family members while women are abroad. After living abroad, many returned migrants come back to Ecuador with a different understanding of the roles and identities that they construct on a daily basis. Similar to migrants' adjustment to living in Spain, returned migrants must also reconfigure their practices in Ecuador during the reintegration process.

In the past ten years, Ecuadorians have altered their migration to and from Spain as compared to previous decades. The results have been a decrease in overall emigration to Spain, an increase in the departure from Spain to other European countries, and an increase in return migration to Ecuador. The subject of return migration is nascent as Spain suffers the effects of the global economic crisis and immigration policies create stricter barriers for Ecuadorian entry and settlement. Research surrounding Ecuadorian return migration emphasizes the motivations for return from a macro-level perspective, highlighting economic and political forces that have

forced some Ecuadorians to leave Spain (Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011; Castles and Miller 2010; Chaloff et al. 2012; Lin et al. 2013). Researchers cite the real estate bubble crash, current unemployment crisis, and decreased access to social services as the main factors of immigrant hardship abroad which is forcing return (Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011; Pérez 2010).

Gioconda Herrera studies the effects of the economic crisis on Ecuadorian migrants in Spain from a transnational household perspective (2012). Through interviews conducted with transnational families in Spain and in Ecuador from 2008-2009, Herrera examines how migrants and migrants' families cope with the economic crisis in Spain. Herrera reveals how transnational households negotiate social reproduction strategies to adapt to financial difficulties amidst the economic crisis (2012).

Similar to Herrera's work, my research highlights the reconfiguration of social reproduction strategies among migrant families. Specifically, I demonstrate how women's roles change with respect to household responsibilities throughout migration and return. I analyze in what ways migrant women's participation in social reproduction varies by comparing household activities performed in Spain and in Ecuador. My focus on female returned migrants emphasizes aspects of social reproduction negotiation that are unique to women. The interviews I conducted with returned female migrants and their personal narratives provide a context for the return process from an individual perspective, which facilitates a greater understanding of return migration beyond the macro-level forces.

As part of the return process for Ecuadorian women, they must adopt certain roles and practices in order to adapt to living, once again, in their native country. Similar to the initial settlement process upon arrival in Spain, when Ecuadorian women return, they reconfigure their identities based on their roles as citizens, employees, wives, and mothers. Migration and return

are part of a dynamic process in which women continually construct their roles and identities (Bastia and Busse 2011; Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011; Margheritis 2011). My research looks at the experience of women as returned migrants and extends the literature that provides insight into return migration. As part of the migrant women's return to Ecuador, I look at how female empowerment is negotiated. While research on female migrants finds that migration can provide opportunities to enhance female empowerment through economic mobility and greater independence, there is less focus on how gained empowerment is reconfigured when female migrants return home (Batia and Busse 2011; Ghosh 2009; Gaye and Jha 2011; Hugo 2000). A valuable extension of this topic would include an analysis of the durability of empowerment, achieved through migration, when female migrants come back to their home country.

In Bastia and Busse's study of Peruvian and Bolivian migrant women who return from the U.S., Argentina, and Spain, they look at how constructions of gender within families are shaped through female migration (2011). Bastia and Busse find that empowerment gained abroad is temporary for some migrant women, not durable across borders (2011). Upon return to the country of origin, many women abandon their "non-traditional" gender constructions they developed while living abroad, such as becoming the family breadwinner. When Bolivian women settle back home, they consistently attempt to "reproduce patriarchal family relations, by often 'returning' the breadwinning role to their partners in the form of investment that will lead to their eventual employment" (Bastia and Busse 2011: 27). Despite the Bolivian women's role as breadwinner while living abroad, upon return they use accumulated wages to invest in taxis for their husbands to restore the men's status as household breadwinner. Meanwhile, most of the returned migrant women choose to adopt roles as stay-at-home wives and mothers in Bolivia. In this way, women transfer their status as primary income earner to their husbands and devote

themselves to domestic responsibilities in order to uphold patriarchal norms that support a male-led household.

Bastia and Busse's work serves as comparative analysis for my research on the experience of Ecuadorian women with respect to reconfigured gender roles upon return. By adding to Bastia and Busse's findings, my Ecuadorian case study will contribute to future studies that focus on female migrants and gender identities during migration and upon return. Lastly, my research aims to highlight the experiences of returned migrants in order to encourage future work oriented towards providing support to help facilitate reintegration. Returned migrants warrant assistance that distinguishes their needs from the migrant population abroad and furthermore, differentiates between the needs for returned men and returned women.

Theoretical Perspective

This section outlines the theoretical framework related to gender and international migration that I use to examine the experiences of Ecuadorian female migrants abroad and upon returning from Spain. I frame my research around Judith Lorber's social construction of gender theory and how this relates to women's active configuration of their identity. Additionally, I draw from sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's study of Mexican migrant families living in the U.S. which examines how gender is reconfigured during migration.

Individuals construct their identity as a constantly evolving, multidimensional process that is shaped by cultural, historical, political, and social contexts (Frable 1997). With respect to men and women, the social construction of gender often creates distinct expectations for masculine and feminine roles. In Lorber's "'Night to his Day': The Social Construction of Gender," she posits that society creates and re-creates expectations that attempt to define gender and, ultimately, differentiate between masculine and feminine (1994: 54). In other words, the

construction of gender represents how people assign meaning to an individual's biological sex. The social construction of gender is a fluid, ongoing process in which people are constantly constructing gender in their everyday lives (Lorber 1994: 54). Thus, men and women actively configure the meanings attached to their gendered identity, which can be in a perpetual state of reconfiguration. Lorber also argues that many people uphold a particular social construction of gender, which emphasizes opposing classifications of male and female, subordinates women's status to that of men, and maintains gender inequality (1994: 62). Because of this inequality, the construction of gendered identities results in varying experiences for men and women.

Lorber's theory can be applied to migration to reveal how gender roles and identities create distinct experiences for migrant men and women. Specifically, the feminization of migration reveals the unique ways in which female migrants construct their gendered identity throughout the migration process. Migration forces women to adopt roles in the host country that vary from those of men and vary from those upheld in their native country. Migration not only results in varied identities and practices for male versus female migrants, but also reconfigures roles for women abroad as compared to their responsibilities back home. For migrants abroad, gender often influences men and women's different roles as related to employment, family relationships, domestic responsibilities, and household authority. The same is true during the return process for migrants who are coming home. Lorber's theory on the social construction of gender can be applied to the return process for migrant women as they continue to form their gender identity as an active, fluid process when they return to their home country.

In Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's book *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Migration*, she analyzes how gender roles are constructed throughout the migration and

settlement process. Hondagneu-Sotelo's case study of Mexican migrant families living in the U.S. examines how women's increased participation in migration creates a corresponding reconfiguration of gender constructions and behaviors. Hondagneu-Sotelo argues that "gender and immigration are reflexively intertwined. Gender relations shape immigration patterns, and in turn, migration experiences reshape gender relations" (1994: 2). In order to adapt to living in the U.S., Mexican women adopt different roles from those they performed in Mexico. These new roles and responsibilities often defy traditionally gendered activities performed in Mexico, which means that migrant women's new activities create a reconfiguration of traditional gender constructions upheld in Mexico. Hondagneu-Sotelo also argues that migrant women face potential opportunities for female empowerment through employment opportunities, increased authority over household decisions, and greater participation in the public sphere (1994). This empowerment influences how Mexican migrant women construct their identity in the U.S. Similar to Mexican female migrants in the U.S., Ecuadorian women in Spain reconfigure identity while living abroad. My research applies Hondagneu-Sotelo's theory on the reconfiguration of gender during women's time abroad to female migrants' return process. In this way, I examine not only how women construct their identity during migration but also how they continue to reconstruct gender when they come home to Ecuador. Moreover, I explore in what ways Ecuadorian women gain empowerment abroad and whether they maintain increased autonomy when they return to Ecuador.

Method

I first arrived in my Peace Corps village in the southern highland region of Ecuador in September 2008. Initially, I expected that people would be living in small modest houses, struggling to financially support their families, and doing odd-end jobs. However, as I glanced

down the tiny town's dirt road, I saw an eclectic mix of housing and automobiles, ranging from motorcycles parked out front of adobe-walled huts to giant Land Rovers parked outside of large three-story homes with intricate glass windows and Spanish tiled roofs. The humble dwellings exploded with sounds of children playing, smells of women cooking, and sights of men cutting weeds with machetes. Meanwhile, the more modern, yet modest, houses appeared abandoned with few signs of life. As I realized later, these latter houses belonged to families of Ecuadorian migrants who were working abroad in Spain. The houses were constructed with remittances that Ecuadorians sent home in order to assure greater amenities and a better life for their families. The more I learned about the migrants and their families, the more I realized that that my remote rural village was more international in scope than I had ever anticipated.

When I arrived in San Pedro de Vilcabamba, in Ecuador's southernmost province of Loja, my first task was to find a place to live. As I introduced myself to the local population of my village, around 1,000 people, I began asking about rooms in houses or houses to rent. During my search people answered with very similar responses: "That house is empty because the family went to Spain" or "This house has plenty of room because the father lives alone because all of his children are working in Spain" and "You could ask at that house because the family is in Spain, but they always come back in June for the town festivals." When I asked individuals about their family members working abroad, I also received a variety of responses about who had migrated. One person would say that his mother had gone, or his uncle, sometimes a woman would say that her sister went, and in some cases sons and daughters had made the journey to Spain. At times, it was difficult to encounter families in my village that did *not* have relatives working abroad or did not know of someone in town who had a migrant family member. I wondered whether my town was an exceptional case with respect to its emigrant population and

preferred destination of Spain, but realized that Ecuadorians from all over the country, predominantly in the highlands and the coast, had migrated to Spain in search of secure employment and economic stability that they were unable to secure in their native country of Ecuador. The migrants from my community were not the exception but were part of the vast Ecuadorian exodus that was transforming into something established and familiar for this tiny Andean nation.

After living for one year in southern Ecuador, I moved to the capital city of Quito in October 2009 to continue my work as a Peace Corps volunteer. As I heard about the continuing emigration of Ecuadorians, I simultaneously learned about Ecuadorians who had decided to leave Spain and to return home. Additionally, the Ecuadorian and Spanish governments established offices, programs, and provided assistance to Ecuadorian migrants who voluntarily agreed to return to Ecuador. Returned migrants left Spain because the unemployment rate exploded and migrants found themselves unemployed, drowning in debt, and unable to support themselves or send remittances to their families back home in Ecuador.

I finished my Peace Corps service in October 2010 and returned to the U.S. to begin my studies at the University of Kansas. In the summer of 2012, I went back to Ecuador to conduct research for my thesis. The returned migrant population continued to increase in the months leading up to my field research. Recently, the total number of Ecuadorian migrants who have left Spain to come back to Ecuador has reached an unprecedented level. Ecuador's leading national newspaper, *El Comercio*, reported that Ecuadorian returned migrants from Spain totaled 52,536 individuals for 2012 alone ("52 Mil Ecuatorianos" 2013). However, I not only wanted to study the experiences of returned migrants but wanted to expand my research and analyze organizations and government entities that offered services for the growing returned migrant

population. In order to have greater access to these representatives, I decided to conduct my fieldwork in Quito where the government and NGO offices for migrants were headquartered. In the city, I was able to visit the federal government's migrant office, the provincial government's migration office, as well as migrant-focused NGOs with offices located in Quito. Through my interviews in Quito, I gained insight into the perspective of returned migrants and institutions with respect to challenges and opportunities encountered during the return process. The narratives of the women and the organizations shed light on my research question of how Ecuadorian female migrants reformulate roles and identities during migration and upon return.

I conducted my field research in Quito, Ecuador beginning May 18, 2012 and ending July 20, 2012. Before leaving for Ecuador, my research methodology and interview questions were approved by the University of Kansas Human Subjects Committee. I conducted a total of 24 interviews with three different groups to gain a multidimensional perspective on issues surrounding Ecuadorian migrants and returned migrants. The three interview groups were Ecuadorian migrant women still living and working in Spain, Ecuadorian migrant women returned from Spain and living in Quito, and representatives from institutions working with migrants and/or migrant women in Quito. My interview participants included eight Ecuadorian female migrants still in Spain, ten female returned migrants, and six representatives from government and NGO offices that offered programs for returned migrants in Ecuador.

Overall, the Ecuadorian women were very forthcoming when asked about their experiences in Spain and in Ecuador. Before the interviews, I had encountered some resistance and skepticism from some of the women when I initially contacted them. Some of the women questioned my motives for researching Ecuadorian migration and interviewing Ecuadorian women since I was a "*gringa*." After I explained my connection with Ecuador, that I had lived

there previously for two years and that my husband was a native *Quiteño*, I gained credibility and earned greater trust with the women. Furthermore, despite my outsider status as a white woman from the U.S., my experience living abroad as a female in a foreign country and dealing with the return process in the U.S. served as a common factor for reflection between the Ecuadorian women and myself.

When I arrived in Quito, I went to the office of the *Secretaria Nacional del Migrante* (National Secretary of the Migrant [SENAMI]) to learn about the different programs offered at the national level for migrants, families of migrants, and returned migrants. I also went to four other institutions to learn about migrant and/or gender-focused programs. These included the provincial government *Oficina del Migrante y Movilidad Humana* (Office of Migration and Human Mobility), *Fundación Esperanza* (Foundation Hope), *Asociación Rumiñahui Hispano-Ecuatoriana* (Hispanic-Ecuadorian Rumiñahui Association), and the *Centro Ecuatoriano para la Promoción y Acción de la Mujer* (Ecuadorian Center for Female Advancement and Action [CEPAM]). I conducted interviews with representatives from each of these offices in order to learn about assistance programs for returned migrants, and specifically female returned migrants. Through my interviews with these groups, I also gained insight into what they might consider to be the most pressing issues for the migrant population.

The women in my sample represent a heterogeneous group with distinct experiences. My interviews with female returned migrants included a sample of women of varying age, education level, marital status, length of time abroad, as well as women who migrated alone or accompanied by family members. The women's ages range from twenty-three to fifty-six years old with an average age of thirty-nine. Of the eighteen females, all have completed at least a high school education and six have a university degree. Half of the women were single and

childless upon migrating to Spain and half were married with children. Of the married women with children, seven of the nine left at least one child behind in Ecuador when they migrated to Spain. The majority of women migrated during the period from 1996 to 2002, with time spent abroad ranging from two years to nineteen years and an average of 10.5 years for current and returned female migrants.

Furthermore, I interviewed returned migrant women who had participated in government-sponsored programs through SENAMI or the Office of Migration and Human Mobility during their return, and women who received no third-party sponsored assistance, either through government or NGO services, when they returned. Two women had received assistance from SENAMI in bringing their household goods from Spain to Ecuador. Another woman had received assistance from the Office of Migration and Human Mobility in obtaining information about bank loan options for returned migrants. I conducted interviews via SKYPE and Facebook video chat with Ecuadorian migrants still living and working abroad in Spain. The interviews with the migrants abroad provided insight into the economic and social situation in Spain in addition to the women's daily lives, roles, and identities abroad. Their experiences helped to contextualize and explain the current situation in Spain while also describing personal motivations for staying in Spain versus returning home to Ecuador.

All eighteen of the Ecuadorian women, both those currently residing in Spain and returned migrants, who participated in interviews identified themselves as *mestizo*. My research sample population of migrant women reflects Ecuador's *mestizo* majority—77 percent—among the general population which also includes 10 percent white, 7 percent indigenous, and 5 percent Afro-Ecuadorian (Ecuador Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, “Censo de Población y Vivienda” 2012). *Mestizo* Ecuadorians are also most common among the Ecuadorian emigrant

population and make up approximately 94 percent of all Ecuadorian migrants abroad (Camacho Zambrano 2008: 15). Therefore, the women participating in my research reflect the general racial composition of Ecuadorian migrants abroad.

The feminization of Ecuadorian migration caused an increase in the number of female migrants working abroad in Spain. While some women had previous work experience from Ecuador, others entered the workforce for the first time upon migrating. Prior to migrating, of the ten returned migrants, six were employed outside of the home or were full time students, one helped her husband run a family-owned small business, and three were stay-at-home mothers. In Spain, all ten women were employed in various industries, with a large concentration in the service sector. Specifically, six of the women worked as domestic workers, two worked as cleaning women for various businesses, one worked in a lawyer's office, and one worked in a daycare center for children with autism. Upon return to Ecuador, five women are employed, three women are working as stay-at-home mothers, and two are unemployed but currently looking for jobs.

The returned migrant women had varying educational backgrounds. Three women had completed a bachelor's degree from Ecuadorian universities and the remaining seven women had completed high school. While living in Spain, all of the women worked in jobs that did not require secondary education. Thus, the university-trained migrant women faced downward mobility in their jobs and were unable to gain employment with wages that reflected their earning potential as university graduates. Additionally, despite educational backgrounds, the migrant women worked predominantly in jobs associated with female migrant labor. Jobs were located in the low-skilled, low-wage sector and included responsibilities typically relegated to women such as cleaning, cooking, and caretaking.

Participants were selected using snowball sampling. I began looking for returned migrant women through the SENAMI office. I was required to submit an official request to one of the minister's advisors for approval before I could gain access to returned migrants' information. The approval process turned into a three-week delay, during which time I began searching for returned female migrants through other organizations and personal contacts. An acquaintance in Quito introduced me to a staff member who worked at the Office of Migration and Human Mobility in the Pichincha province. The representative assisted me with finding contacts through the office's small registry of women who had visited their office with inquiries regarding services available to returned migrants. I compiled a list of ten women whom I contacted via phone and asked if they were willing to meet in person for an interview. Using these contacts, I was able to schedule interviews with four of the ten women. Additionally, the staff member at the Office of Migration and Human Mobility placed me in contact with an acquaintance of his who was a female returned migrant from Spain. I conducted an interview with her at her place of work. I conducted interviews with the former four women in a small available space within the larger Office of the Migration and Human Mobility. Interviews were semi-structured and consisted of open-ended questions in order to encourage the participants to develop their answers according to their personal experiences. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, recorded with a digital voice recorder, and then transferred to my computer for subsequent transcription.

Before beginning the interview, I provided some information about myself and my research. Next, I explained to each woman that their participation was voluntary and read to them an oral consent form approved by the KU Human Subjects Committee. I used oral consent versus written so as not to discriminate against possible illiterate participants. Once the interviewee agreed to the oral consent, I began the interview. Interviews lasted from sixty to

ninety minutes. I followed a specific list of questions which began with basic information about when they migrated, when they returned, if they migrated alone or accompanied by a family member, the type of occupation they had before migrating, while in Spain, and after returning to Ecuador.³ Though I followed a set list of questions, when appropriate during the interviews, I would ask supplementary or follow-up questions so as to clarify or expand upon specific experiences of the participant. I met with all of the women individually and only conducted one interview with each participant.

After waiting for contacts from SENAMI, I received a database with contact information for returned migrant women who had participated in SENAMI-sponsored programs upon returning from abroad. Because SENAMI served the national migrant population from one office headquartered in Quito, many of the women named in the database lived in other provinces throughout the country. I intended to conduct face to face interviews with the returned female migrants. Therefore, I was limited to contact only the women living in Quito from the information provided by SENAMI. Additionally, I had been given contact information for female returned migrants without identifying their host country while abroad. I had to rule out some of the women because they had returned from either Italy or the United States. Ultimately, I was able to connect with two women with whom I conducted individual interviews in their homes.

I connected with the remaining three returned female migrants through a chance encounter with a taxi driver in Quito. When the man asked me why I was in Quito for the summer, I explained to him my research topic and asked if he knew any female returned

³ The list of questions used in the interviews is provided in English in Appendix I.

migrants. Hesitating at first, he eventually shared that his landlord was a returned migrant from Spain. When I asked him whether I could have her contact information, he initially said no and continued to ask me detailed questions about my research, asking why I wanted to interview female returned migrants. I sensed his hesitation and before getting out of the taxi, in an ultimate attempt to receive the contact information for the woman, I showed him my University of Kansas student ID and my business card from the University of Kansas Career Center as credentials to prove my student status. Feeling reassured, the taxi driver gave me the name and phone number of his landlady, whom I contacted the next day for an interview. I went to her house to conduct the interview, and in the same day, carried out two more interviews with her neighbor and family member who were also female returned migrants from Spain. Each of the three interviews was conducted in the interviewee's home.

When I interviewed Ecuadorian female migrants in Spain, I spoke with the women via online video using either Skype or Facebook. I was able to find these women through friends and relatives that I had in Quito. My husband's family is from Quito and they put me in contact with individuals who had family members living in Spain. Additionally, through speaking with acquaintances I had met during Peace Corps, I was also able to contact female migrants working abroad. I followed a similar interview structure with the current migrants, first gaining their oral consent, sharing information about my research, and then recording the interviews with my digital recording device. I proceeded with the same initial questions as I had used in my interviews with the returned migrants, but instead of asking them about their return and reintegration process, I focused more on their motivations for staying in Spain and their considerations for returning to Ecuador. I spoke with these women only once and interviewed them individually. Two of the eight women also spoke about their migrant experiences in other

European countries before establishing residence in Spain. One woman migrated and initially lived in Germany while another woman originally worked in Italy before moving to Spain. Their perspectives were particularly significant because they provided comparative examples of the situation of Ecuadorian migrant women in European countries outside of Spain.

Overview of the Study

This thesis examines the experiences of female migrants, looking specifically at Ecuadorian women living abroad in Spain and upon return to Ecuador. My research analyzes international migration at different phases in the migration process to highlight how migration reconfigures gender constructions in the host country and in the country of origin. Using Ecuadorian women's personal narratives, I illustrate the challenges and opportunities that returned migrant women confront and subsequently, to what extent public and private-sponsored assistance programs provide support to women upon return to Ecuador. Chapter 2 outlines the historical background surrounding Ecuadorian international migration and shows how migration flows evolved with respect to settlement destinations and migrant demographic. Chapter 3 addresses contemporary trends in Ecuadorian migration to Spain and return migration to Ecuador. This chapter highlights the motivations surrounding migration and return to Ecuador in addition to women's fluctuating roles and identities throughout the comprehensive migration process. Chapter 4 examines prevalent themes emerging from the female migrants' narratives. The women's experiences shed light on experiences with family authority, household responsibilities, and economic independence confronted during migration and upon return to Ecuador. The thesis concludes with chapter 5, which summarizes this study's contribution to current scholarship surrounding gender and migration, the limitations of the research, and future expansion of the research.

Chapter 2

Historical Patterns of Ecuadorian Migration

Introduction

This chapter examines the economic, political, and social conditions surrounding Ecuadorian emigration since the 1950s. Three distinct periods illustrate the evolving migration trends and migrant demographic throughout the twentieth century. During the 1950s-1960s Ecuador's first significant emigration wave consisted of rural male peasants settling in New York. The initial "pioneer" migrants from the southern highland region of Ecuador migrated in reaction to the struggling "Panama hat" industry which resulted in reduced employment and limited wages for rural men and their families. Men who could no longer earn a living in Ecuador used trade networks to migrate to the U.S. alone, often leaving wives and children behind.

In the 1970s and 1980s Ecuadorians increased the rate of migration with continued preferred settlement in the U.S. The 1980s debt crisis plagued Latin America and devastated the Ecuadorian economy, which forced Ecuadorians to look abroad for opportunities for economic stability unattainable in their native country. Younger, single men and middle-aged, married men continued to lead migration to the U.S., often traveling independently and leaving family members behind in Ecuador. Panama hat brokers and traders converted into migration facilitators, known as *tramitadores*, who arranged transit, falsified identification documents, and U.S. employment for male Ecuadorian migrants (Kyle and Goldstein 2001: 5). Migrant men borrowed from family members and friends to pay the \$6,000-\$10,000 fee for the *tramitadores* or took on debts from money lenders known as *chulqueros* to finance their trip to the U.S. (Kyle

and Goldstein 2001: 5). During the 1980s and 1970s, Ecuadorian migrant women emerged as a small population of secondary migrants who traveled to the U.S. to reunite with male partners.

From the 1990s-2000s the Ecuadorian migrant demographic shifted to include a greater number of women and a greater preference for settlement in Spain. Neoliberal economic policies, enacted in Ecuador in response to accumulating debt, exacerbated financial difficulties for the general population. Moreover, increased poverty, unemployment, and inequality during the 1990s created greater hardships for the lower class and for women. In the same period, migration policies facilitated Ecuadorian entry into Spain and deterred migration to the U.S. Spain's liberal migration policies coupled with economic opportunities for migrant workers altered Ecuadorians' preferred host country from the U.S. to Spain.

In each period economic conditions in Ecuador and the host country shaped Ecuadorians' motivations for migration, the migrant demographic, and the destination abroad. Furthermore, political regulations influenced Ecuadorians' settlement preference in specific host countries and entry strategies. Economic, political, and cultural incentives in Spain pulled Ecuadorians to Spain. This movement resulted in a concentration of Ecuadorians in Spain and also an increase in female-led migration. Today, Ecuadorians represent the largest Latin American migrant population residing in Spain.

1950s-1960s: Ecuadorian “Pioneer” Migration to the U.S.

In the 1950s the U.S. emerged as the preferred destination for the increasing Ecuadorian emigrant population. In previous decades Ecuadorians preferred migration to Venezuela. Before the 1950s, many Ecuadorian emigrants travelled to Venezuela to take advantage of greater wages in the growing oil-based economy (Astudillo and Cordero 1990; Jokisch 2007). Though some Ecuadorians continued to migrate to Venezuela throughout the 1970s, the U.S. replaced

Venezuela as the preferred destination for Ecuadorian migrants beginning in the 1950s. From 1930 until 1949 approximately 2,500 Ecuadorians resided legally in the United States (Herrera 2008: 58). In the following decades, 1950-1969, the latter population multiplied to over 42,000 individuals (Herrera 2008: 58). Ecuadorians increased migration because weakened Ecuadorian industries provided fewer jobs. Greater employment opportunities in the U.S. provided migration incentives to Ecuadorians to search for greater economic security abroad.

The decline in the “Panama hat” industry catalyzed Ecuadorians’ internal migration within Ecuador and out migration to the U.S. “Panama hats” are beige colored and hand woven from a type of straw called *paja toquilla* which is grown in Monte Cristo in the Ecuadorian coastal province of Manabi (Miller 1986). Rural-based peasants in the southern highland provinces of Cañar and Azuay performed the weaving of the hats operating as a cottage-industry from their homes. The name “Panama hat” exists because Panama served as the main intermediate shipping point for international distribution of the hats. However, all hats originated from Ecuador, the country of production. When Panama hat sales decreased, Ecuadorians formerly employed in the hat trade searched for alternative income opportunities. In the 1950s, the Panama hat industry experienced a substantial decline in sales due to increased competition from industrialized Asian nations and low overall market demand (Jokisch 2007; Kyle and Goldstein 2011). Many male Panama hat workers in Ecuador, no longer able to support themselves or families, migrated to the coast to work in the agricultural industry harvesting bananas and cacao (Kyle 2000). Other men used commercial networks, established through former involvement in the Panama hat sector, to migrate to the US. The men received the title “pioneer migrants” as the first substantial Ecuadorian migration wave to the U.S (Jokisch 2007: 2). Ecuadorian pioneer migrants established social networks that facilitated

future Ecuadorian migration to the U.S. Once abroad, Ecuadorian migrants concentrated settlement in enclave communities served as points of reception for newly arrived Ecuadorians.

New York emerged as Ecuadorians' settlement hub because of business relationships established through the Panama hat industry. New York City housed the main sale centers for the Panama hats, despite having production operations based in Ecuador. Trade networks emerged when hats were exported from production centers in Ecuador to be sold in New York. As a result, business linkages formed between producers and vendors in Ecuador and in New York (Miller 1986). When the Panama hat trade declined, artisan weavers from Ecuadorian regions of production, mainly men, followed the hats' pathway by migrating to New York (Kyle 2011). Some migrants' work-based contacts in New York helped facilitate arrival in the U.S. The Panama hat industry promoted the movement of goods, which later fostered Ecuadorian migrants' movement towards the U.S. with centralized settlement in New York. Ecuadorians' increased presence in New York helped establish a migrant community still existing today as a popular destination for Ecuadorian immigrants.

1970s-1980s: Increased Ecuadorian Migration to the U.S.

Ecuadorian emigration increased in the 1970s with continued preference for the U.S. The larger and more established Ecuadorian immigrant community in the U.S. encouraged continued migration from Ecuador. Veteran migrants connected recently arrived Ecuadorians with employment opportunities, housing accommodations, and helped with orientation of this group upon arrival (Camacho Zambrano 2009). In the 1970s, Ecuador experienced an economic boom from increased prices for petroleum, the leading export. However, Ecuadorians continued to leave in search of greater economic opportunities abroad despite greater economic growth and increased government spending on development projects (Camacho Zambrano 2009: 54).

Migrants continued to show preference towards U.S. settlement with ongoing concentration in the New York City area and initial settlement in Chicago (Kyle 2000: 65, 66). Therefore, migration channels established in the 1950s and 1960s perpetuated Ecuadorian migration in subsequent decades. In the “lost decade” of the 1980s, when accumulating debts threatened the well-being of Ecuador, international migration provided an escape for Ecuadorian citizens. The Ecuadorian migrant presence in New York helped to expand migration when an increasing number of Ecuadorians left Ecuador in the 1970s and 1980s.

The economic history in Latin America has been plagued by extreme volatility and instability. While the early 1970s experienced a boom from the petroleum industry, the 1980s evolved into a debt crisis as countries accumulated debts they had no way of repaying. The 1980s Latin American debt crisis created financial hardship throughout the continent and in Ecuador, created financial distress at a national level that affected people of all social classes. In Ecuador, the debt crisis has created a long-term ongoing struggle to repay the national debt which soared to \$16 billion in 2000 (Lind 2002: 234). At the turn of the century, Ecuador held the highest debt per capita in all of Latin America. In the 1980s both middle-class urban dwellers and lower-class rural peasants struggled under the debt crisis experiencing dramatic decreases in overall income (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002: 79). The severity of the debt crisis provoked universal economic turmoil which instigated panic among a broader section of the Ecuadorian population.

In addition to accumulating debt, many Latin American countries suffered from stagnant economic growth and rampant inflation during the 1980s (Huber and Solt 2004). In response, Latin American countries looking for global assistance turned to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). These two organizations offered loans to finance nations’

debts contingent upon specific conditions to be upheld by Latin American countries. The conditions stipulated mandatory implementation of neoliberal policies through structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that included increased privatization of services and liberalized trade. The SAPs were effective as short-term shock reform to stabilize the economies. Neoliberal restructuring helped to curb inflation and encourage growth in the short-term, but resulted in increased inequality and poverty over the long-term (*Money Lenders*, documentary film, 1991; Sparr 1994:13-39).

Structural Adjustment Programs greatly affected women in Latin American countries. Pamela Sparr offers a feminist critique on the SAPs and underlines the fact that neoliberal policies affected women in a distinctly different manner than they did their male counterparts (Sparr 1994:13-39). In many aspects, the SAPs actually created more extreme hardships for women than for men within the same nation. With the adoption of World Bank and IMF policies many services, historically provided through the government, were privatized. This meant that many people, especially the poor, had less access to basic necessities such as potable water, education, and health care. Neoliberalism took away social service safety nets that many poor families depended on for survival (Huber and Solt 2004). This was a significant burden for women who were often designated responsibilities that relied upon the provision of those services. Women in Latin America were forced to look for employment to supplement household income while simultaneously spending more time devoted to supplementing lack of public services (Sparr 1994). Overall, the SAPs represented a very double-edged form of advancement for the nation and for women living under the constraints of the new system.

In Ecuador, neoliberalism created more work and greater struggle for women to provide for their families. Whereas former government sponsored social welfare programs helped to

maintain families, many impoverished households in Ecuador could no longer afford basic services offered through private companies (Lind 2005). As economic stability became more precarious in Ecuador, citizens searched for alternative options to escape difficult conditions. Migration created an *escape valve* for those Ecuadorians willing and able to make the journey abroad. Previous Ecuadorian migration waves consisted of men from rural areas in Southern Ecuador migrating alone to the U.S. The 1980s produced an increase in female migrants, urban migrants, and Ecuadorians migrating as family units (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002: 79; Camacho Zambrano 2009: 58). In the 1980s many families of migrants relied upon men's remittances as the primary household income while women were obligated to uphold domestic responsibilities. As women's duties increased in the men's absence and access to resources became more expensive through the privatization of social services, females often confronted an inability to provide for their families with limited time and financial resources. Women's struggles with poverty and inequality planted the seed that gave way to increased female migration in the decades following the debt crisis.

Economic desperation forced many Ecuadorians to consider illegal pathways to migrate to the U.S. In previous decades risks associated with illegal entry often dissuaded Ecuadorians from migrating. However, for many Ecuadorians the dire economic conditions resulting from the debt crisis outweighed the dangers of illegal migration and increased unlawful entry into the U.S (Kyle and Goldstein 2011: 5). Migration facilitators—referred to as *coyotes* (smugglers)—assisted Ecuadorians throughout the journey to the U.S. and often demanded payments of \$8,000-\$10,000 for passage (Miles 2004: 84). The *coyotes* equipped the Ecuadorians with falsified documents and escorted migrants to U.S., typically New York, by way of a flight to Central America followed by entry into the U.S. by foot via the U.S.-Mexico border (Jokisch and

Pribilsky 2002). Despite migrants' efforts to escape national economic turmoil in Ecuador, many undocumented individuals confronted new challenges during migration. Illegal entry exposed migrants to physical danger and potential apprehension by U.S. border patrol. Moreover, many migrants struggled with financial problems as they took on large debts to pay off loans used to finance travel to the U.S.

1990s-2000s: Spain Replaces U.S. as Preferred Destination for Ecuadorian Migrants

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Ecuador emigration rates reached their highest recorded levels due in part to four industry-specific economic crises. The decreased earnings of Ecuador's principal export commodities—petroleum, bananas, cacao, and shrimp—crippled Ecuador's economy and forced many Ecuadorians to leave. Climactic effects of *El Niño* damaged the banana and cacao export industries on the coast resulting in reduced earnings for agricultural workers (Bertoli et. al 2011: 4). Taura Syndrome, a virus caused by agricultural pesticide run-off, contaminated Ecuador's shrimp industry and killed over one third of the shrimp targeted for export sales (Lightner et al. 1995: 54). Additionally, "in 1998, the international price of oil, which represented the largest source of foreign currency earnings and fiscal revenue, fell to a historical low" (Bertoli et al. 2010: 4). Though the Ecuadorian government attempted to remedy the economic crisis, many people in Ecuador questioned the speed at which officials would restore export earnings. Ecuadorians looked towards migration as an opportunity to increase their income to levels unachievable in Ecuador.

Ecuador's currency inflation and dollarization process exacerbated Ecuadorians' economic struggles during the 1990s. The unstable currency created economic crises at the national level, which trickled down to the general population. In 1999 the *sucre* reached

inflation levels that forced the government to convert to the dollar.⁴ During the dollarization process, inflation decreased but did little to remedy poverty and unemployment rates, which increased to critical levels (Beckerman and Solimano 2002: 13). National poverty peaked at forty percent throughout the crisis and unemployment rates reached fifteen percent (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002: 76; Pérez and Gallardo 2005: 74). Despite efforts to introduce the dollar to remedy the unstable *sucre*, Ecuador's economic policies from 1998-2000 failed to provide adequate measures to protect citizens against continued economic struggle. Ecuadorians faced limited opportunities for economic mobility in Ecuador at the turn of the century. Ecuadorians unable to secure financial stability in Ecuador looked to migration to alleviate economic strain.

Ecuador's banking crisis intensified financial strains amidst the national economic crisis by restricting Ecuadorians' access to personal savings accounts. Banks fearing capital flight froze accounts to prohibit Ecuadorians' access to personal funds. The *sucre*'s currency devaluation provoked banks' fear that clients would make massive monetary withdrawals to protect savings (Bertoli et al. 2011: 4). In March 1999, during a four-day holiday weekend, the Ecuadorian government closed banks and subsequently froze clients' bank accounts (Jacome 2004: 22). The "banking holiday" created a crisis for banking clients who could no longer access their money. Despite guarantees to redistribute funds in full, many banks have not fully reimbursed individuals still recuperating from lost savings. Ecuadorians with no savings to support themselves searched for alternative options to ensure economic security in the short and long-term. Working abroad offered greater wages than in Ecuador and the chance to recoup lost savings at a faster rate.

⁴ The *sucre* was Ecuador's currency up until 2000 when the government converted to the U.S. dollar.

In addition to economic turmoil, political protests plagued the 1990s in response to expanding neoliberal policies implemented by successive Ecuadorian presidents. Sixto Duran was elected as president in 1992 and implemented reforms aimed at radical neoliberalism (Zamosc 2004). Under Duran, the

“Structural Adjustment Plan, prepared with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), proposed drastic steps to deregulate trade and capital flows, reduce social spending, and eliminate subsidies for essential services and basic consumption items. In addition, the plan defined goals that had never been pursued in Ecuador, such as reducing the payroll of public employees and privatizing the state’s enterprises and social security program” (Zamosc 2004: 133).

Duran’s proposed reforms created a public concern and backlash against his administration. Specifically, the indigenous groups protested over policies that affected land rights, water rights, and Ecuador’s program called “Agrarian Social Security” (*Seguro Social Campesino*). Within Ecuador’s Social Security program, the Agrarian Social Security existed as a sub-administration that received around 50 percent of the entire budget to provide health programs and services throughout the countryside in Ecuador. The Agrarian Social Security program established hospitals and clinics throughout rural areas and in many indigenous communities where access to health care was often limited. If people needed medicine or to visit a doctor, they received these services for free through the Agrarian Social Security. As part of Duran’s neoliberal reforms, the president began discussing the liquidation of Ecuador’s Social Security program. In 1993, indigenous groups protested against this measure because it would restrict their access to basic healthcare. Indigenous groups also protested against the Law of Agrarian Modernization under Duran, which aimed to “eliminate the legal basis for land expropriation, direct all state support toward entrepreneurial production, abolish communal property, and privatize irrigation water” (Zamosc 2004: 135). The Agrarian Law threatened the sovereignty of the indigenous groups

with respect to their access to land and water, both vital resources necessary to maintain their population. When the Agrarian Law was passed, the government was inundated with heated protests by indigenous and peasant groups. In the end, the agrarian protestors succeeded and forced Congress to renegotiate the law to make considerations for indigenous communities' right to property ownership and public water usage.

The political protests of the early 1990s were followed by extreme political instability and continued protests against the government's neoliberal policies. From 1996-2005, Ecuador's government suffered from extreme executive turnover, having six presidents in the span of nine years. Although some of the Presidents were selected peacefully through democratic elections, others came to power through uprisings or forceful overthrow. President Abdala Bucaram was elected in 1996, but after confirmed allegations of corruption and embezzlement, Congress declared him mentally unstable and unfit to serve as President. After losing power in 1997, Bucaram fled to Panama and Fabian Alarcon was appointed as the new President. Less than two years later, a new President, Jamil Mahuad came to power in 1998 but was overthrown by a coup in 2000 led by military and indigenous leaders (Margheritis 2011: 203). In 2000, the indigenous population mobilized an uprising to protest President Jamil Mahuad for his neoliberal reforms aimed towards government deregulation, privatization, and dollarization (Chiriboga 2001). Jamil Mahuad was an economically conservative president who was implementing neoliberal policies by taking on loans from the World Bank and IMF to finance national debt and privatizing services formerly provided by the government. Indigenous leaders protested Mahuad's administration because he implemented austerity policies focused on curbing national debt that ultimately undermined the social welfare of the Ecuadorian population (Avilés 2009).

The indigenous leaders' protests against Mahuad, in conjunction with support from military leaders, led to the President's overthrow.

Three more Presidents presided from 2000 until 2007 when Rafael Correa was appointed President through democratic elections.⁵ Correa is the first Ecuadorian President in fifteen years to serve a complete presidential term and, in February 2013, was elected to serve a second term and final term. Although Ecuador has achieved more stable political leadership through Correa's administration, the political turnover in the 1990s and early 2000s caused many Ecuadorians to hold a shattered image of their broken government. During these decades, many Ecuadorians grew concerned that the government would never achieve stability. Ecuadorians' confidence in government integrity drastically diminished around the turn of the century, especially amongst the more vulnerable populations including the rural peasants, the indigenous groups, and the lower-class. Though many Ecuadorians were motivated to migrate because of economic woes in the 1990s, the tumultuous political climate further instigated Ecuadorians' departure towards the exterior.

Restrictive migration policies in the U.S. discouraged Ecuadorian immigration. Ecuadorians faced increasing difficulties from anti-immigration policies when migrating to the U.S. In the 1990s, Ecuadorians changed the preferred destination from the U.S. to Spain (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002) In this decade, intensified surveillance and militarization of the US-Mexico border dissuaded Ecuadorian migrants from risking entry along the U.S. border (Jimenez 2010). Additionally, regulations such as Operation Gatekeeper and Operation Hold the Line provoked increased anti-immigration discourse discouraging Ecuadorians from migrating to the U.S. through legal and illegal channels (Jiménez

⁵ Gustavo Noboa served as President from 2000-2003, Lucio Gutierrez served from 2003-2005, and Alfredo Palacio served from 2005-2007 (Margheritis 2011: 203).

2010). Undocumented Ecuadorians struggled with the dangers surrounding U.S. entry and the difficulties of working in the U.S. without the required documentation. Restrictive immigration policies and anti-immigrant movements encouraged Ecuadorians considering migration to the U.S. to search for alternative destinations.

U.S. anti-illegal immigrant controls heightened in the 2000s amidst a growing concern for national security through secured borders. After September 11, 2001 the U.S. intensified homeland security as the American public heightened anti-immigrant discourse. Emerging anti-immigrant sentiments contributed to a growing anti-Latino movement depicting Latino immigrants as a force invading the U.S. (Chavez 2008). Conservative interest groups formed around the anti-immigrant movement such as the Minuteman Project, a private citizen watch group aimed at preventing the illegal entry of immigrants along the U.S.-Mexico border (Mathew, DeVivo, and MacMillan 2006). Ecuadorians migrating illegally to the U.S. faced intensified obstacles for entry and endured discrimination amidst a growing atmosphere of tightened borders. Consequently, Spain replaced the U.S. as the top destination for Ecuadorian migrants searching for a host country with favorable migration policies.

Ecuadorian emigrants' preference for Spain as a host country altered Ecuadorians' traditional settlement patterns and migrant population. For the first time, Ecuadorians migrating to Spain surpassed the number of Ecuadorians leaving for the U.S. Comparatively, "The total net flow of Ecuadorians to the U.S. between 1999 and 2005 amounts to 114,000 individuals, compared with 384,000 individuals to Spain" (Bertoli 2011: 7). The progressive increase in migrants reflected Ecuadorians' preference for settlement in Spain. Ecuadorian migration to Spain rose from 1,954 individuals in 1998 to 8,973 people in 1999 and multiplied to 91,120 Ecuadorians in 2000 (Herrera et al. 2006: 61). Expanded transnational networks facilitated

future migration as more Ecuadorians settled in Spain. Ecuadorian migrants' cumulative settlement established *Ecuadorians* as the largest South American presence in Spain.

Ecuadorians preferred Spain because of liberal migration entry policies that facilitated legal settlement. Specifically, Ecuadorians benefited from a bilateral agreement between Ecuador and Spain, named the *Hispano-Ecuadorian Agreement*, which granted Ecuadorians entry into Spain without a visa. The treaty allowed Ecuadorians to enter Spain without a pre-existing work visa and stay up to 90 days as a tourist (Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002: 83). The arrangement facilitated legal entry by helping incoming Ecuadorians avoid the complicated process of applying for a visa. If an Ecuadorian migrant procured employment during the initial 90 days, he/she could extend time abroad with a work permit. Spain's policies towards Ecuadorian migrants created an unrestrictive mode of reception by allowing for Ecuadorians' legal entry into Spain. Ecuadorians migrating to Spain avoided the risks associated with undocumented entry that many migrants endured in other host countries.

Spain and Ecuador's shared Spanish language further facilitated migration and eased Ecuadorian migrants' transition abroad. Ecuadorians' Spanish knowledge allowed for greater communication with Spanish nationals and, in addition to economic incentives, lured many Ecuadorian migrants to Spain (Hall 2008: 87). Ecuadorians could network with Spanish nationals to learn about opportunities for housing, employment, and work permits. Ecuadorians' familiarity with Spanish also created an advantage for gaining employment over other non-Spanish speaking migrant groups living in Spain.

Abundant employment opportunities and promising economic returns provided incentives for Ecuadorians to migrate to Spain. Ecuadorians encountered a better chance for stable employment with greater wages in Spain than in Ecuador. Spain's increase in job growth

expanded from 12 million employed individuals in 1994 to 20 million in 2004 (Bernardi et al. 2011: 150). Job growth occurred in the low-skilled service sector where migrants filled various positions (Bernardi et al. 2011). Despite occupying unskilled jobs in Spain, Ecuadorians experienced upward economic mobility as their wages surpassed levels attainable in Ecuador. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, significant wage differentials between impoverished regions in the global South and developed countries in the North catalyzed Ecuadorian migration to Spain with expectations of maximizing earning potential (Pellegrino 2004). Even though other countries offered competitive wages, Spain's high demand for migrant labor provided the greatest chance for migrants to gain employment. For Ecuadorian men and women, migration to Spain represented an economic strategy to ensure financial stability through consistent wages.

The Spanish labor market demanded male migrant workers in industries that offered few opportunities for year-round employment. The construction and agricultural industries in Spain, requiring the greatest amount of male migrant-labor, employed many Ecuadorians in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Ecuadorian men's seasonal jobs in agriculture and construction resulted in inconsistent wages throughout the year (Camacho Zambrano and Hernandez Basante 2005:75). Despite the disadvantages for migrant men working in industries with short-term jobs, migrant males had the greatest access to these types of jobs. Inconsistent wages placed Ecuadorian migrant men in an unstable economic position while abroad. Meanwhile, Ecuadorian migrant females working in the domestic service sector generated regular uninterrupted wages through year-round employment.

Changes in the Spanish population and labor force demographic created greater demand for female migrant workers in the domestic service industry. In response, female migrants fulfilled jobs as care workers in Spaniards' homes. Spain experienced an increase in the aging

population and an increase in the number of Spanish women working outside the home towards the end of the twentieth century (Cuesta 2007). As a result, there was an increase in the number of domestic service jobs as caretakers for the elderly population and children. Moreover, domestic sector work permits accounted for 74 percent of all work permits granted from Spain to Ecuador in 1998 (Acosta et. al 2006: 84). The service industry labor demand pulled Ecuadorian women towards Spain and contributed to the increased concentration of Ecuadorians as domestic workers. Ecuadorian women established themselves as domestic workers because of plentiful job opportunities, and employers showed preference for Ecuadorians over other migrant groups.

Preference for Latin American domestic workers concentrated Ecuadorians in the domestic service industry. Latin American women's Spanish language knowledge and cultural values increased their desirability as migrant domestic workers. Spanish employers preferred migrant women from Latin America over Africa and Asia because Latinas could communicate in Spanish. Furthermore, Spanish employers constructed Latin American women workers as "caring, patient, cheerful, respectful and very integrated in their families," which made them ideal candidates for domestic work (Dobner and Tappert 2010: 16). Associations of Latin American women as ideal domestic workers created an employment niche for Ecuadorian female migrants in Spain.

The feminization of Ecuadorian emigration increased women's representation among the Ecuadorian migrant community in Spain. Before the 1990s Ecuadorian women migrated in small-scale quantities to other countries. However, the female migrants who settled in Spain represented half of the overall Ecuadorian migrant population. During Ecuadorians' initial mass departure in the late 1990s "rapid emigration was led by women; in 1997, more than 58 percent of the Ecuadorian emigrants to Spain were women; in that year, 68 percent of all legally resident

Ecuadorians were female” (Gratton 2007: 587). In 2005 Ecuadorian women accounted for 51.36 percent of Ecuadorian migrants living in Spain while men made up 48.64 percent (Herrera et al. 2006: 63). The increase of Ecuadorian females as independent migrants created greater gender parity among the Ecuadorian migrant population. Ecuadorian women became migrant protagonists, no longer stay-behind wives and mothers.

Ecuador’s emigrant population evolved in quantity and composition. Push and pull factors between Ecuador and the receiving countries provoked mass departure, altered the preferred settlement destination, and transformed the migrant demographic. Over the span of sixty years, Ecuadorian migrants evolved from rural-based men leaving for New York to include urban-based women settling in Spain. Specifically, women gained a significant role in the Ecuadorian migrant community as primary migrants. Women no longer stayed behind to accommodate men’s migration but, in peak years, helped to lead Ecuadorians abroad.

The next chapter focuses on Ecuadorian women’s experiences in Spain and upon return to Ecuador. Chapter 3 incorporates Ecuadorian women’s narratives to highlight the varying roles and identities that females adopt throughout the migration process.

Chapter 3

Migrant Women's Experiences Abroad in Spain and upon Return to Ecuador

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the experiences of Ecuadorian migrant women while living in Spain and their experiences upon return to Ecuador. Specifically, who are Ecuadorian migrant women and what are their motivations behind the migration decision-making process? First, I examine what roles and responsibilities these female migrants adopt to adjust to a new life in Spain. I highlight the various struggles that Ecuadorian women in Spain confront as migrants, employees, wives, and mothers and how these women reconcile their experiences upon return to Ecuador. Second, I examine how and why the migration process shapes women's roles and identity. Lastly, I explain the dynamics of identity construction during the return process as women come home to Ecuador.

Ecuadorian Female Migrant Demographic

Migrant women from Ecuador are predominantly *mestizo*, urban, come from a lower class background, and have at least a high-school education. *Mestizo* Ecuadorians represent 94.7 percent of migrants abroad while indigenous Ecuadorian migrants make up less than 6 percent of the migrant population (Camacho Zambrano 2008: 15). Ecuadorian migrants' socioeconomic status is divided into four main groups. Approximately 30 percent of migrants come from economically solvent households, 39 percent from vulnerable households, 26 percent from poor households, and 5 percent come from indigent homes (Camacho Zambrano 2008: 18). In economically solvent households, the family's financial resources are substantial enough to provide basic household necessities with a surplus for savings. Migrants from economically solvent households were often motivated to leave Ecuador as a result of the 1990s economic

crisis. Even though families could support their basic needs, increased unemployment and economic instability threatened the household well-being. Migrants believed that wages earned abroad would ensure greater financial security than that attainable in Ecuador. In vulnerable households, the family's income is generally sufficient to provide for basic needs, but typically does not allow for savings, thus decreasing a family's financial stability. Migrants from these families often have their savings depleted and never have enough money to "get ahead." These individuals leave Ecuador because migration offers an opportunity for greater accumulated savings to provide long-term economic stability for a family. In poor and indigent households, families often do not have enough money to cover the household's basic needs. Ecuadorian migrants from impoverished households often took on large debts to finance migration with the idea that wages abroad would provide a pathway out of poverty for their families.

With respect to education, 52 percent of Ecuadorian female migrants in Spain have completed a secondary education and 12 percent have some university training or a college degree (Herrera 2008: 36). Despite having a university degree and being able to work in a high-skilled job in their country of origin, some college-educated women chose to migrate because of the vast wage differential between Spain and Ecuador. Even though many college educated migrant women experience downward employment mobility and work in low-skilled jobs in Spain, they migrate because they can make more money abroad than they would in Ecuador (Camacho Zambrano 2009). Furthermore, females with varying levels of education were also extremely vulnerable to the consequences of the 1990s Ecuadorian economic crisis with respect to workforce participation. Females experienced a twelve percent unemployment rate in 1993 that increased to sixteen percent in 1998 and peaked at more than nineteen percent in 1999 (Pérez and Gallardo 2005: 74). In the urban workforce of Ecuador, women were most prevalent

in the business sectors of sales (thirty three percent), manufacturing (twelve percent), and domestic service (eleven percent) (Pérez and Gallardo 2005: 78). During the 1990s, these sectors downsized to accommodate decreased production which resulted in higher unemployment for females in Ecuador. Thus, female migration from urban areas increased in the 1990s. Unemployment provided an incentive for women to leave Ecuador and catalyzed their migration to Spain where jobs were more plentiful and wages were higher. In the late 2000s, 75 percent of all Ecuadorian female migrants abroad originated from urban areas in Ecuador (Herrera 2008: 29). The majority migrated from the three largest cities in Ecuador: Guayaquil, Quito, and Cuenca.

Ecuadorian women abroad comprise a diverse group of women who migrate independently and are sometimes accompanied by family members. In 2001, the average age of Ecuadorian migrant women was 28.4 years old with 68 percent of female migrants between 20 and 40 years of age (Camacho Zambrano 2008: 14). Among Ecuadorian female migrants in Spain, 43 percent are single, 38 percent married, and the remaining individuals are widowed, divorced, or separated (Camacho Zambrano 2009: 88). The younger single women with no dependents often migrate alone. Married women also tend to migrate to Spain independently and, in fewer instances, accompanied by husbands and children. Compared to other migrant groups in Spain such as Peruvians, Dominicans, and Moroccans, Ecuadorian women are most likely to live abroad without any immediate family members (Colectivo IOÉ 2001). Many migrant mothers cannot take children with them to Spain and therefore, leave sons and daughters behind in Ecuador. Approximately 80 percent of Ecuadorian migrant mothers report having at least one child in Ecuador while less than 20 percent live abroad with all of their children (Gratton 2007: 589). Many Ecuadorian female migrants with children become transnational

mothers when they live in Spain, enduring separation from their children during their time abroad. Feminized Ecuadorian emigration transforms nuclear families into transnational households as women reconfigure their roles as wives and mothers from abroad. Household separation results in negotiations of new responsibilities for female migrants abroad and family members left behind.

Migrant Women's Experiences: Pre-Departure Decision-Making Process

Household demands influence the migration decision-making process. Sometimes the family, not the individual, decides if a family member migrates. Many household units use migration as an economic strategy to increase the collective family income. Families select members to migrate who represent the greatest potential for largest economic returns with the lowest associated risk (Massey et al. 2003). During the decision-making process, many Ecuadorian families designate women as household migrants because females have greater opportunities than men for stable employment in Spain. The household migration decision-making process revolves around reciprocal expectations that all family members, migrants and non-migrants, have to fulfill. Families anticipate women's remittances in exchange for helping with necessary accommodations during the family member's absence.

In 1986, after becoming a member country of the European Union, Spain transitioned from a manufacturing society to an economy based predominantly on the service sector. Specifically, the global economic restructuring of Spain's economy resulted in a boom in service sector employment in industries such as construction and tourism. Emerging global cities such as Madrid and Barcelona experienced steady economic growth due to expanding industries, which required low-skilled service workers to help meet the employment demands. Many of the new jobs were filled by migrant workers; men often worked in construction and women in

domestic service. Female migrants were favored with ample job opportunities cleaning buildings and offices for new businesses in addition to working in the homes of families employed in the expanding economy. An increase in the labor force participation rate for Spanish women created a female absence in the home which migrant domestic workers filled, since wives and mothers earned wages to finance domestic help. Ecuadorian women encountered numerous job openings when they arrived in Spain. Ecuadorian female migrants, due to their ability to speak Spanish and the stereotypical construction of their nurturing disposition, were often preferred by Spanish employers to work in the home as caregivers for elderly parents and young children. The large presence of Ecuadorians living in Spain also helped newly arrived migrants network with co-nationals to find job opportunities and learn about the host country. Thus, job opportunities for women and social networks influenced Ecuadorians' motivations for settling in Spain and established an overwhelming preference for Spain over other host countries.

A woman's age and marital status often determine the family's ability to negotiate migration. Young single women's fewer familial obligations in the home country facilitate mobility. Women without husbands and/or children often have fewer domestic responsibilities in the household. Some families, preferring single, childless daughters as migrants, strongly encourage that daughters move abroad. Parents believe that daughters will send larger remittances with greater consistency than sons (Tacoli 1999: 663). Families can depend on young single women for consistent household income and few family accommodations are required to allow for the women's absence. Families and young women themselves capitalize on single females' greater freedom to migrate without extensive family negotiation in the decision-making process.

Some young single women make an independent decision to migrate without family intervention. The women inform families of the decision to migrate instead of parents designating daughters as household migrants. Daughters living with parents do not always seek permission to migrate. One Ecuadorian woman, who was 22 years old, single, and living with her parents before she migrated, explains:

“My mother didn’t know that I was going to Spain until one day before my departure. My father and I decided that we would wait to tell her because if we told her maybe 6 months before, she would get sad and cry and we didn’t want that. So the day that I bought the ticket, I came home at 7:00 at night to pack my bags, but my mother was already crying because she had found out. My father was the one who helped me figure out how to go. He collaborated and helped me get ready. It was easy. I spoke with him and told him I had decided to go” (Personal Interview, 30 June 2012).⁶

A single, childless woman has greater opportunity to independently decide to migrate and often views migration as part of the independence or “coming of age” process. Migration represents an alternative to marriage, which often marks a daughter’s departure from her parents’ home.

Older married women’s familial responsibilities require greater cooperation from family members during migration. Married women carry out the majority of domestic chores and caretaking activities in the household, which alternate family members must perform while females live abroad. Migrant wives and mothers confront family opposition when departure creates increased responsibilities for husbands and children (Cerrutti and Massey 2001). The nuclear family members negotiate migration by trying to dissuade women from migration or attempt to accompany wives and mothers abroad. Women with husbands and children, unlike young single women, cannot approach migration as an independent decision. Married women

⁶ To protect the identity of interview participants, neither their real names nor pseudonyms will be assigned. All women will be designated according to their migrant status (current or returned) and place of residence.

bargain with family members because migration forces husbands and children to make various sacrifices in the woman's absence.

Migrant wives' decision-making process to leave Ecuador requires household negotiation dependent upon family support. Married women consult with parents and husbands before deciding to migrate. In some instances, a woman has to receive the husband's approval to migrate, especially among couples with children (Beneria 2008: 10). One woman, in her late forties, describes the decision-making process when she migrated to Spain, leaving her husband and 2 young children behind:

"I spoke with my husband to see if I could go [to Spain] because I had two children in Ecuador, my daughter and my son. I spoke with my husband and he didn't want me to go, especially because my son was so young, he had just turned two. But we talked, and he accepted, and I went... We made an agreement that he had to be responsible for our kids and take care of them while I was gone. Meanwhile, I had to keep up my end of the agreement over there [in Spain]" (Personal interview, 22 June 2012).

Unlike younger single migrants, married women negotiate greater household obligations with family members still living in Ecuador. Wives do not make the decision independently to migrate even though many migrate unaccompanied to Spain. Married women's migration requires greater cooperation of family members to participate in the decision-making process.

Migrant mothers negotiate the decision to migrate within the nuclear family and the extended family. The negotiation process includes designating an alternate caregiver when mothers leave children behind in Ecuador. If the mother trusts the father as a caretaker and he agrees, the father cares for the children in the mother's absence. However, female migrants typically prefer that women in the extended family, such as a grandmother or an aunt, care for the children (Schmalzbauer 2010: 1865). In some families, migrant mothers arrange for alternate caregivers even when the fathers remain in Ecuador (Ortuño 2009). Despite the father's presence, some

women question a man's ability to provide the same level of care as a female caregiver. Migrant mothers have to negotiate with caretakers during the migration decision-making process to ensure their children's wellbeing. The caretakers' agreement to look after the children facilitates the mother's migration by providing a stable domestic arrangement during the mother's absence.

Motivations Surrounding Migration

Single women often express the desire to explore new opportunities as a motivation for migrating to Spain. Many young single women migrate immediately following high-school or university. In some instances, migration creates a fascination that pulls women away from university studies. One Ecuadorian woman, who was a 21-year-old university student when she migrated to Madrid, explains:

“I migrated to Spain in 1994. I came by myself on a vacation tour with people from Ecuador and Latin America. It was a tourist trip in Europe. After that trip I returned back to Ecuador in October and after speaking with my parents I returned to Spain in December of that year. Since I was studying international studies and other cultures my parents agreed to send me for one year...It was only supposed to be a visit because I was in my last year of university, I was about to finish... But I fell in love with Spain and imagined that I would live here. I was fascinated and decided to stay. The plan was to stay during my studies, but now I've been here 19 years” (Personal interview, 2 July 2012).

Another Ecuadorian migrant in Valencia, also a university student when she migrated, recounts her desire to explore Spain:

“When I left Ecuador in 1998, I was finishing my fourth year in the university, studying business administration. I was single at the time...I migrated because I wanted to visit Spain, I wanted to explore. When I migrated, I had a job here in Ecuador and I was studying. But, I left with a female cousin because we had heard it was good over there” (Personal interview, 30 June 2012).

Both of the migrant women abandoned their studies to live abroad. In these examples, the lure of an unknown country to explore and promising opportunities pulls young independent women from Ecuador to Spain.

Young-adult single-women view migration not only as an opportunity for exploration but a chance to enhance their freedom. Single females who migrate to Spain unaccompanied by parents and siblings experience greater independence within the family. In Ecuador women often live with parents until marriage, regardless of age. Migration offers an alternative to marriage because it also allows single unmarried women to live alone outside the parents' home (Cuesta 2007: 127). Migration fosters female independence and allows for female autonomy. For single female migrants, working abroad often means "for the first time they enjoy liberty, independence and the ability to make decisions for themselves" (Ruiz 2002: 94). Through the migration process the women defy traditional gender expectations in Ecuador that equate independence from parents with marriage. Female migrants who make decisions independent of their family unit transform into autonomous actors and experience a freedom they cannot easily obtain in Ecuador.

Married women with children express that limited employment opportunities in Ecuador coupled with low income levels prompted their migration abroad. In Spain, abundant jobs and higher incomes served as the principle motivation for Ecuadorian emigration. Many Ecuadorian women felt that they could more easily find a job in Spain than in Ecuador and could make greater wages abroad than they could earn in Ecuador. One Ecuadorian woman, a married 40-year-old with one child, explains her reasons for leaving Ecuador in 2002:

"I went to Spain because I saw that here in Ecuador, every day, the situation was getting more difficult. I had a job where I worked a lot of hours but didn't receive very much pay. I worked as a seller for a hot dog company here in Quito. At the time I left, my husband was unemployed. I decided to migrate instead of my husband. I had the opportunity because two of my aunts were in Spain so they offered to help me" (Personal interview, 17 July 2012).

In addition to receiving low wages for work in Ecuador, some women face discrimination based on age when seeking employment, which impedes their job search process. In Quito, a common hiring practice involves placing age limitations for applicants and requires women to be between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age. In addition, many positions require female applicants to submit a color photo with their resume. A 42-year-old woman describes her difficulty in finding a job in Ecuador based on age discrimination, which forced her to look abroad for work: “With respect to going to Spain, I went because of my inability to find a job. For me, I kept getting older and due to age, I couldn’t find a job here in Ecuador. Mostly for this, I thought about going to Spain” (11 July 2012). In Spain, Ecuadorian migrant women can earn greater income and in certain industries, such as domestic service, older women are often valued for their years of experience in maintaining a home and raising children. Despite the unfamiliarity with living in Spain, many female migrants faced greater job opportunities abroad than those available in Ecuador.

Wives and mothers migrate in order to improve the quality of life for their families. In Ecuador, female migrants make the sacrifice to leave their home country to achieve economic stability for the household. One Ecuadorian woman, a 50-year-old wife and mother of four children, describes her family’s economic struggles as the principle factor in deciding to migrate to Spain:

“I migrated because, in Ecuador, we could never afford anything. And there were never enough jobs, especially stable jobs like you can find in other countries. When we went to Spain, it wasn’t like it is now with the crisis. We were there as migrants and people hired us to perform different jobs. There were also opportunities for job training programs available in Spain which helped me to get higher paying jobs. My husband migrated for work as well because we could never make enough money [in Ecuador]. Before leaving, we had two children and decided to have another. When the time came we ended up having twins. After that, it was impossible to make enough money in Ecuador to support our four children” (Personal interview, 17 July 2012).

Additionally, a 42-year-old wife and mother of two explains economic motivations for migrating and “getting ahead” financially:

“The main reason why we [my husband and I] migrated was for economic reasons. We had always lived as renters; we’d never owned a house, so that’s why we wanted to go. And we had planned to go to Spain and return after three years. This was the original plan. In the end, we stayed for 11 years” (Personal interview, 11 July 2012).

Migration offered women the chance to help secure their families’ economic future by earning wages to provide for household basics and, in some cases, accumulate savings for long-term investments. Money motivated Ecuadorian women to leave their home to ensure the wellbeing of their family.

Migrant Women’s Experiences Abroad: Assuming New Identities

In Ecuador, traditional social constructions of gender often influence identities, roles, and practices for men and women. In Ecuador, *mestizo* women operate within a gender framework that constructs femininity with respect to ideals of *marianismo*, which valorizes the female as a morally-sound, motherly, and sexually-chaste individual (Stevens and Pescatello 1973). These same women are expected to adhere to gender expectations that valorize a woman’s submissive role at the familial and social level as well as her responsibility for carrying out daily activities of social reproduction within the domestic space (Gill 1993: 74). In many Ecuadorian households, it is expected that the woman will perform the majority or all of the duties required for maintaining the domestic sphere and raising children (Herrera 2003: 208). On the other hand, men uphold roles that designate them as the household economic provider who is allowed to be sexually promiscuous, have a strong presence in the public sphere, and contribute little if any to domestic chores (Miles 2000: 63).

Through the migration process both married and single Ecuadorian female immigrants living in Spain undergo experiences that cause them to reshape their traditional gender expectations of what it means to be a woman, a wife, and/or a mother. When Ecuadorian females migrate, they reconfigure socially and culturally constructed conceptions of female duties within the family structure. Ecuadorian females in Spain can encounter opportunities to enhance their economic autonomy and liberalize their personal freedom with respect to the family unit. This ultimately reconfigures their construction of gendered roles and responsibilities and can also subsequently modify the gendered practices of male partners in Spain and back home in Ecuador.

Ecuadorian migrant women navigate multiple roles, which shape their identities while living abroad. For example, some women become employees, long-distance wives, and transnational mothers for the first time upon migration. The numerous roles produce “multiple dimensions of identity,” which influence migrants’ experiences (Pessar and Mahler 2003: 816). One Ecuadorian female living in Valencia claims that “We Ecuadorians here [in Spain], at some point, we have to adapt ourselves to an identity that we didn’t bring with us” (Personal Interview, 15 September 2012). She explains how “We Ecuadorian women here [in Spain] are something very different than women in Ecuador” (Personal Interview, 15 September 2012). The migration experience allows women to transform multiple aspects of their identity they did not have when they lived in Ecuador. However, female migrants’ shifting roles produce a mixture of potential opportunities and challenges. Some women prefer living abroad because of greater independence while others, who feel challenged by the host country restrictions for migrants, long for a return home.

Obstacles in the host country hinder female migrants' efforts to capitalize on opportunities for greater autonomy. Migrant women experience simultaneous gains and losses in personal autonomy when they assume multiple roles during migration. Autonomy here refers to the woman's ability to independently govern her actions without the interference of external constraints. For example, migrant women's contradictory benefits can include gains in household authority with simultaneous decreased status as "foreigners" in the host country (Pessar 1999: 586). As breadwinners, women have greater control over household economic resources. However, migrant status often constrains women because the host society subordinates female migrants based on their outsider status (Parreñas 2001). Migrant women's outsider status in the host country can limit women's potential increase in female autonomy. Compared to privileges enjoyed as citizens in the country of origin, migrant women lack recourse in the host country.

Identity as Related to Nationality and Race

Outsider status often limits migrants' acceptance by the host country. Migrant women may experience discrimination as outsiders when they transform from a native citizen to a foreign guest. In some cases, due to "outsider" status, migrants face prejudice from Spaniards who resent migrants' presence (Colectivo IOÉ and Fundación Secretariado General Gitano 2003). For example, Spaniards use pejorative terms such as *Sudaco* or *Sudaca* to single-out South American migrants.⁷ Moreover, Spaniards direct phrases such as "Go home *Sudaco/a*" toward Latin American migrants (Personal interview, 18 July 2012). In the latter instance, migrant women encounter discrimination based on national identity and newly adopted migrant status. Migrants' identity as non-nationals restricts the ability to live in Spain completely free

⁷ *Sudaca* is a shortened form of *Sudamericano/a*, which refers to someone from South America.

from prejudice. While living in Spain, Ecuadorian female migrants surrender the social acceptance associated with national belonging they enjoyed as native citizens in Ecuador.

South American migrants confront racial prejudice in Spain. Some Spaniards discriminate against South Americans because of indigenous heritage and a darker phenotype. Spaniards use ethnicity to construct South Americans as an outsider group, inferior to the Spanish population (Piñeiro and Aparicio 2002). An Ecuadorian woman living in Spain describes her experience with race identity:

“I haven’t ever felt outright discriminated against. But I have felt rejected due to physical traits because, obviously, between Ecuadorians and Europeans, we are different colors... At times I have lived instances where I didn’t feel accepted because of my race. Not discriminated against for gender, but for race, yes” (Personal interview, 15 September 2012).

The female interviewee bases feelings of rejection upon physical differences between Ecuadorians and Spaniards. In Ecuador, *mestizo* women share a physical likeness that prevents racial prejudice such as migrants experience in Spain. Indigenous women and Afro-Ecuadorian women, due to their unique phenotype as compared to *mestizo* women, experience more racial prejudice in Ecuador. As migrants in Spain, the more pronounced differences in physical appearance between Spaniards and Ecuador make *mestizo* Ecuadorian women more vulnerable to racial discrimination than they experience in Ecuador. When Ecuadorian women live among Spanish nationals, females’ racial identity compounds with migrant status to reformulate and often limit how migrant women perceive autonomy.

Though many women do not report having experienced direct racial discrimination, they have witnessed discriminatory and pejorative comments in public towards foreigners in Spain. One Ecuadorian woman initially migrated to Germany and lived there for 10 years. In order to apply for residency papers, she decided to leave Germany and migrate to Spain where she has

resided for the past 5 years. She offers her comparison between Germany and Spain with respect to racial discrimination inflicted by Spaniards towards the migrant population:

“In Germany, people seem to have more respect towards foreigners. But here in Spain, it’s not like that. In the short amount of time that I have lived in Spain, I have seen a lot of racism. The people here are more closed off to foreigners. In Germany, I never saw people make a bad face towards others, they were very respectful... But here in Spain I have seen those things happen. Sometimes when I have been in the public busses, I have seen people make comments towards foreigners. They begin to insult and say ‘Go back to your own country’ or ‘You only came here to steal’” (Personal interview, 6 July 2012).

Despite being subject to racism at the hand of Spanish nationals, Ecuadorian migrants settle in Spain because of better economic opportunities. For some, the promise of increased income overshadows the threat of racial discrimination in public or on the job.

Identity as Related to Employment

Ecuadorian female migrants in Spain experience contradictory opportunities for mobility in the employment sector. Despite migrant women’s upward economic mobility through increased wages, migrants often undergo downward occupational mobility by performing jobs in Spain below their skill level. Some Ecuadorian women have completed university degrees or job training programs, approximately 15 percent, that over-qualify them for low-skilled service positions (Gratton 2007: 594). However, Ecuadorian migrants’ wages in Spain increase migrants’ economic status because earnings surpass those achievable in Ecuador (Gratton 2007). Female migrants’ identity as employees influences their status in the home and in the workplace. Women’s increased contribution to household income garners greater respect from family members. Despite increased wages, migrant jobs inflict low social status by relegating women to the bottom of the employment hierarchy.

Ecuadorian women in Spain work predominantly in the service sector. Specifically, the majority of women work as domestic workers in private homes. In general, domestic workers

hold either live-in positions or work for hourly wages, which allows for lodging accommodations separate from the employers (Parreñas 2001). Live-in positions require more hours of work but migrants can save money by not paying rent. Hourly positions provide more freedom for migrants to structure work schedules but require additional money to finance room and board (Parreñas 2001; Personal interview, 30 June 2012). Preference for domestic service positions depends on migrant women's family presence abroad. Migrant women with family members in Spain often seek employment in hourly positions to allow for greater privacy to spend time with family. Meanwhile, unaccompanied migrants without family in Spain often prefer a live-in position to emulate a family living environment.

Ecuadorian women's overrepresentation in the domestic service sector intersects with race and gender. Many Spaniards view domestic workers as the archetypal figure for Ecuadorian women in Spain. One Ecuadorian woman, 31 years old and married with one child, describes her experience working as a caretaker:

“I took care of a family where the father was Norwegian and the mother was Spanish so the child appeared very Nordic. People would always comment by saying ‘Oh look, that Ecuadorian is caring for the Nordic child’ always relating the South American with service, either caretaking or cleaning. In this way, we [Ecuadorian women] have always had to overcome this obstacle to show that we can work in the domestic sector but we can also work in something different like business or in retail. But this has a lot to do with the stereotype that people have towards us” (Personal interview, 15 September 2012).

The Ecuadorian's role as a domestic worker conflates gender and race with employment.

Spaniards view domestic work as a low-ranking job within the employment hierarchy and associate it mostly with migrant labor. Furthermore, the social construction of gender often associates domestic responsibilities with women, which increases the demand for female domestic workers. Thus, native Spaniards, especially men, rarely work as domestic workers.

The three emerging trends that explain the greater prevalence of female migrant domestic

workers in Spain “include an increased education level in Spain during the last decades, higher expectations at the labour market from autochthonous Spaniards and precarious work conditions in the domestic service sector. These internal changes and structures have led to a growing demand of migrant domestic workers in Spain” (Dobner and Tappert 2010: 6).

Ecuadorian women’s employment in the domestic service industry perpetuates gender constructions that associate women with domestic roles. Female domestic workers have responsibilities often associated with women such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children. According to Peterson and Runyan, gender constructions associating females with the home reveal how the *power of gender* operates in the workplace and they contend that “gender divisions of labor particularly exemplify the either-or construction that constitutes the dichotomy of masculine and feminine” (2010: 12). Domestic service workers carry out tasks associated with “women’s work,” which can result in a concentration of females employed in the service sector (Pessar 2005: 4). Female domestic workers recreate and perform gender for wages (Lorber 1994). Migrant women’s roles as domestic workers fail to liberate females from confinement to the domestic sphere. However, domestic workers’ *income* can potentially transform domestic roles within a migrant household. Migrant women’s wages from domestic work provide a tool for negotiation of domestic responsibilities with male partners.

Employment status alters domestic responsibility for men and women. Female migrants’ wages increase their economic contributions to the family unit and often enhance authority over household decision-making. Migration gives women an opportunity for upward economic mobility, which results in greater female empowerment. In Ana Maria Arteaga’s study of female Latin American migrants in Spain, one Ecuadorian migrant explains the opportunities that migration offers: “migration has opened up the possibility of freedom for women. This has

allowed us, in a certain way, to fulfill economic needs and feel free, without the burden of being controlled by a husband” (cited in Arteaga 2010: 64). The migrant women’s increased economic autonomy often intersects with gender-specific domestic responsibilities between male and female partners. Women’s greater wages decrease men’s household control and allow women to replace men as primary domestic earners (Arteaga 2010).

Identity as Related to Gender-Specific Domestic Responsibilities

When husbands and wives migrate together, they uphold more egalitarian household roles. Both spouses work full-time jobs outside the home and expect mutual assistance with domestic chores. When migrant women earn wages similar to husbands’ earnings, wives command greater assistance in the household and husbands provide more help (Pessar 1999: 585). Migrant women in Spain often experience increased household authority as compared to levels achieved in Ecuador. One returned migrant in Quito compares domestic responsibilities when she lived with her husband and two daughters in Spain and in Ecuador:

“In Spain, we both left early to go to work. At night when I arrived home from work, often times my husband would already have dinner ready. After dinner, we would both help bathe the children and get them ready for bed. In Ecuador, before we left for Spain, my husband worked all day and it stopped there. He didn’t help in the house” (Personal interview, 11 June 2012).

Female migrants’ employment status affects domestic life because spouses adopt a more equal division of household responsibilities. In the host country, female migrants rarely bear the entire burden of household duties.

Migration modifies gender specific-responsibilities in transnational households in the host country and country of origin. Migration by unaccompanied married women transposes gender-specific household responsibilities. The women become the economic earners for the family and, as a result, men back home take on a greater role with domestic duties. In the

woman's absence, the man often cares for children and maintains the household. The latter activities defy traditional gender identities that associate women with the private and men with public space and the breadwinner role (Herrera 2003). Consequently, Ecuadorian husbands with wives living in Spain have an increased responsibility inside the household, which means loss of freedom formerly enjoyed in the wives' presence at home (Zambrano and Basante 2005: 113). Husbands who stay behind become less independent because they adopt traditionally feminine duties that interfere with activities outside of the home. Men who are left behind in Ecuador and those who accompany their migrant wives experience less autonomy as a result of migration. As migrants and partners of female migrants, men lose authority enjoyed before migration.

When deciding a length of time for living abroad, men prefer an early return and women prefer an extended settlement. Migrant women want to stay abroad because the host country often allows greater freedom for females than in the country of origin. However, men often confront decreased authority as migrants. Despite potential social restrictions due to foreign and migrant status, female migrants experience greater liberation in the household and increased presence in the public sphere while living abroad (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Ruiz 2002). Male migrants have fewer liberties than what the men enjoyed in the native country (Parreñas 2001). Female migrants' new roles abroad deviate from traditional gender-specific expectations in Ecuador that grant women less authority than men. Female migrants prefer long-term settlement in host countries because a return to the country of origin could force women to surrender their newfound autonomy gained through migration. In contrast, men desire a return to the native country to reclaim authority at the familial and social level.

Identity as Related to Motherhood

Physical distance between migrant mothers and their children alters motherhood practices. Transnational mothers remain involved in their children's lives while working abroad by providing emotional intimacy, support, and compassion in creative ways through long-distance love. Transnational motherhood defines the mother-child bond "not as physical circuits of migration but as the circuits of affection, caring, and financial support that transcend national borders" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997: 550). Transnational mothers transform parenting practices to fulfill the role of emotional pillar considered a mother's inherent responsibility. Despite female migrants' efforts to adopt mothering behaviors to adapt to transnational motherhood, many suffer from physical separation. Transnational relationships between migrant mothers and children create emotional strain in Spain and in Ecuador.

A mother's physical separation from her children decreases the intimacy of the mother-child relationship. Transnational mothers cannot provide physical affection for children back in the country of origin. Despite a physical absence, migrant mothers stay involved in children's lives through phone calls, sending of gifts through postal mail, or internet video chats (Dreby 2010). One Ecuadorian woman describes her experiences as a transnational mother when she left her two children, who were age 9 and 2, in Ecuador:

"We spoke every weekend and once a week during the week. We were in constant communication. I never got used to it. It was horrible getting used to it. Not living there and being away from my children. But I never lost touch with them, I always called...I had to always speak to my children and my husband. If I didn't, I was never at peace" (Personal interview, 22 June 2012).

Many transnational mothers' attempts to compensate for a lack of physical affection with long-distance communication fail to sustain an intimate mother-child bond. Some mothers and

children never adjust to transnational relationships, which leads to emotional and behavioral problems.

In migrant families, children also experience emotional and psychological issues as they struggle to adjust to their mothers' absence, despite their mothers' efforts to adequately provide parental support from abroad. Migration causes emotional distress in children that affects behavior at school and in the home. Ecuadorian children with one or more parents abroad "suffer from depression, lack of interest in school, and reportedly, a high rate of suicide" (Jokisch 2007: 8). Children contend with feelings of abandonment and restructured living situations that often lead to emotional instability. The mother's absence provokes subsequent delinquent behavior in children who "many times their [children with migrant parents in Spain] school performance goes down at a considerable level and they are seen involved in mischief, struggling or silent all of which constitute a cry for attention" (Fresnada Sierra 2001: 140). Migration provokes familial challenges and modifies behavior within the family structure. Mothers who learn of their children's deteriorating behavior often feel helpless, guilty, and powerless to remedy the situation while still living in Spain.

Children who are left behind often attempt to negotiate migration within the family to reunite with migrant mothers. Children often beg mothers to return to the country of origin or push for reunification with parents in the host country. An Ecuadorian migrant who left a daughter and a son behind describes the child's pleas to reunite:

"My daughter always fought with my husband because she wanted to travel to Spain. I would always say to him that if he didn't want to go to Spain, he should at least send our daughter to accompany me... She was always calling me and telling me to come home... She said that my son didn't want to eat, he was acting up" (Personal interview, 30 June 2012).

Two common features of transnational families exist in this family: children's misbehavior in the mother's absence and children's request for family reunification in the country of origin or the host country (Dreby 2010; Fresnada Sierra 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). Migrant mothers' distance from their children creates emotional strain for both parties and instigates children's attempts at negotiating reunification.

Recent Developments in Ecuadorian Migration Flows: Migrant Women's Fluctuating Settlement Patterns Abroad

Changes in Spain's visa requirements for foreigners decreased Ecuadorian migration to Spain. In 2003, Spain adopted the Schengen tourist visa as a requirement for entry (Adepoju, Van Noorloos, and Zoomers 2010). The Schengen visa allowed for a 90-day visit but permitted holders from staying beyond this deadline and did not grant permission to work in Spain. The Schengen requirement nullified the previous Hispano-Ecuadorian Agreement which allowed Ecuadorian entry into Spain without applying for a visa (Bertoli, Moraga, and Ortega 2011). The Schengen tourist visa requirement caused fewer Ecuadorians to migrate to Spain because of new entry requirements. In 2003, Spain announced that the new policy would apply to Ecuadorians, which caused a subsequent decrease in immigration from 72,581 annual entries to 11,936 in 2004 (Herrera 2008: 65). For the two subsequent years after the change in visa requirement, 2004-2005, the U.S. overtook Spain as the preferred destination for Ecuadorian migration (Bertoli et al. 2011: 60). Ecuadorians decreased documented settlement in Spain because they faced increased difficulty in obtaining residency and permission to work. Ecuadorians, who wanted to avert the Spanish residency requirements, increased migration to alternate host countries and, most commonly, the U.S.

After two years of decreased migration to Spain, Ecuadorians increased migration to Spain once again due to Spain's regularization process for foreigners. In 2005, Spain enacted a period of normalization, from February until May, which granted legal residence to some current immigrants (Gobierno de España 2007: 139). This process was carried out as part of the Regulation of Spain's Organic Law 4/2000 (*Reglamento de la Ley Organica 4/2000*). The Organic Law 4/2000 aimed to expand "the rights and liberties of foreigners in Spain and their social integration" (Gobierno de España 2007: 132). The qualifications to apply for the normalization process stipulated that foreigners could have no criminal record, had to show evidence of residence in Spain for more than six months, and show proof of a work permit for six months following the date of application (Arango and Jachimowicz 2005). The regularization of Ecuadorian workers caused a small spike in migration in the following year as some family members in Ecuador migrated to Spain to reunite with family abroad that had temporary residency status through the 2005 program. Ecuadorian immigrants represented the largest proportion of applicants, submitting 21 percent of the total number of applications received (Arango and Jachimowicz 2005). Despite the slight increase in Ecuadorian migration rates in 2006, 2007 again signaled another decline in Ecuadorian migration to Spain that has continued to the present.

Three emerging trends explain the decreased Ecuadorian migrant population in Spain beginning in 2007. First, Ecuadorians who emigrated for the first time altered their preferred destination from Spain to increase settlement in the U.S. and in Italy (Herrera 2008: 78). Ecuadorians emigrating from their home country bypassed Spain to go directly to these two alternative countries. Second, Ecuadorian migrants living in Spain, concerned over increased migration controls, left Spain and migrated to other European countries to look for work. The

most popular alternative European countries for Ecuadorian settlement included Italy, Germany, and Belgium (International Organization for Migration 2012). These migrants decided not to return to Ecuador but continue their time abroad. Lastly, some Ecuadorian immigrants residing in Spain chose to return to Ecuador. Ecuadorians chose to go back to Ecuador in search of greater security in a familiar environment. Meanwhile, other Ecuadorians opted to settle in alternative countries outside of Spain based on job opportunities and migration policies that allowed for ease of entry.

In 2008, due to the real estate bubble crash, some of the largest banks and insurance companies with global operations went bankrupt or experienced grave economic problems. This led to a global recession and caused some countries to experience a decrease in international trade and a decrease in national income, which affected economic growth and increased unemployment. Spain entered an economic crisis beginning in 2008 that not only caused a decrease in Ecuadorian immigration but also provoked return migration (Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011; Castles and Miller 2010). The recent global economic crisis has brought about decreased economic growth and increased unemployment in Spain, especially among migrant workers. In the past four years, many migrants from Ecuador who had lived in Spain for 15 years encountered an economic environment which offered fewer opportunities for long-term financial stability and secure wages. The economic crisis in Spain affected the migrants residing there as well as families and communities back in Ecuador who depended upon remittances to support day-to-day life.

Spain initially advocated for mass immigration in the 1990s and early 2000s to supply the required labor force to support the expanding economy. Economic growth allowed for industry expansion which created job growth and increased employment for migrants. From 1994 until

the end of 2008, Spain experienced positive economic growth that fluctuated between two and six percent annually (Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España, “Secondary Distribution on National Accounts” 2012). From 1994-2007, Spain also experienced a constant increase in the number of immigrants residing in its borders (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2012). In 2008, Spain experienced consequences from the economic recession and a subsequent rise in unemployment. From 2008 up until the beginning of 2012, Spain’s unemployment rate increased from 9.6 to 24.4 percent (Ecuador Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos 2012). This unemployment was accompanied by a progressive decrease in the GDP growth rate which began declining in 2008 up until 2010 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España, “Secondary Distribution on National Accounts” 2012).

Spain’s economic problems emerged as part of the global economic crisis. The crash of the real estate bubble contributed to a recession that was most severe in the U.S. and in Europe. Up until 2007, Spain had experienced the benefits of the real estate boom. People interested in purchasing real estate and developers working on non-residential projects gained easy access to loans to finance real estate purchases and construction projects (Pérez 2010). As in the U.S., the credits and mortgages available were very flexible for buyers who did not necessarily have a solid credit rating or the ability to afford the required payments. Banks issued sub-prime mortgages to borrowers with low credit ratings in exchange for higher interest rates. Moreover, many banks in Spain issued recourse mortgages.⁸

Migrants in Spain who were unable to pay their mortgage and defaulted on their bank loans lost their houses. Furthermore, the houses were devalued by up to 40 percent because of

⁸ Non-recourse mortgages allow that if a borrower is unable to pay, the bank seizes the house and the debt is forgiven. However, with recourse mortgages when borrowers can’t pay, banks seize the home and if the home does not satisfy the debt amount, including interest, the bank has the right to seize personal assets.

the real estate crash and their market value did not satisfy the full loan amount (Smyth 2012).

People who defaulted on recourse loans lost their house and remained indebted to the banks due to property devaluation and accumulated interest. Migrants who found themselves in this situation often had no choice but to return to their home country, often times with no money, no belongings, and outstanding debt. One Ecuadorian returned migrant describes her mortgage situation in Spain:

“When things got bad in Spain, we [my husband and I] were unable to pay the mortgage on the apartment. We went two years without paying the mortgage. At that point, I finally said to my husband, ‘I’m not going to wait here until we’re living in the street with our children.’ We had gotten to the point that we barely had money to buy food. So I decided it was time to return to Ecuador with my daughters. Right now my husband is still working over in Spain. He says that ‘as long as I have my job here, I am staying. But once my job disappears or I become unemployed, then I will come back.’ But if he loses his job, I don’t know what we will do for money” (Personal interview, 11 July 2012).

If the husband and wife would not have purchased the apartment, they would have no financial obligation tethering them to Spain. However, the husband is forced to stay in Spain to continue paying the mortgage while the wife, for fear of becoming homeless, returns to Ecuador to live with her extended family. Another Ecuadorian female migrant describes the effect of the real estate crisis on Ecuadorians returning home:

“I have known people that have returned to Ecuador. They have not returned as failures but many go with empty pockets, many with debts, and with mortgages here in Spain. Others have returned because the dream of living abroad is no longer true” (Personal interview, 15 September 2012).

Many Ecuadorians settled in Spain because, in the beginning, there were opportunities to find a job, make money, and get ahead. However, some migrants who decided to purchase a house as part of the “dream of living abroad” suffered the negative consequences that followed from the real estate and economic crisis. Outstanding debt and defaulted loans have driven some migrants

from Spain and given them little choice but to migrate to other countries to look for economic opportunities or return to their country of origin.

The real estate bubble crash also affected the construction industry, one of Spain's leading sectors contributing to GDP and a large source of employment for migrant labor. Migrant men have often worked on construction projects involving residential construction and non-residential buildings associated with Spain's tourism industry. In 1996, Spain's construction industry accounted for 6.9 percent of GDP which increased to 10.8 percent in 2006 at the height of the real estate boom (Pérez 2010: 1578). Devaluation of real estate during the crash in 2008 caused many construction companies to suspend projects or shut down altogether. In construction, jobs were cut in half from 2.4 million employees in 2007 to 1.2 in 2011 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España, "Compensation of Employees and Employment by History" 2012). This rampant unemployment affected male migrant workers in particular as they comprised a large percentage of the workforce. Moreover, men who formerly worked in construction encountered difficulty finding work in other industries in Spain that were also plagued by unemployment.

Amidst the economic crisis in Europe, Spain has suffered from one of the highest rates of unemployment in the region. Unemployment rates have hovered between 21 and 26 percent during the last two years (Ecuador Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos 2012). Spanish nationals and migrant workers have struggled with unemployment and have faced increased job competition. Some migrants have lost jobs to Spanish nationals who, because of economic desperation, have been willing to work low-skilled jobs typically performed by migrants. One Ecuadorian migrant woman in Spain explains the increased difficulty in finding work:

“The issue is that the economic situation is difficult right now. The job market is really hard in Spain especially with laborers and people working in the service industry. I will have to wait and see whether I stay here or decide to go back to Ecuador. Now both of my parents are employed in Spain. But they are scared because they have jobs that many people would like to have. The economic crisis is very serious here in Spain. And because of this a lot of businesses are laying off employers. My father has seen the crisis building up and has seen some of his colleagues get laid off... Now, there are not really jobs. And it is changing a lot depending on where you are from. There is a little bit of xenophobia with each job. If you are a Spaniard and if there is a job, you will get a job quicker than a non-Spaniard because the situation is so difficult” (Personal interview, 15 September 2012).

Additionally, migrants in Spain have often been concentrated in industries such as construction and domestic service. Both sectors have been severely impacted by the economic crisis and have fewer jobs available, which situates migrants in a vulnerable position with finding employment (Chaloff, Dumont, and Liebig 2012). An Ecuadorian woman living in Spain describes the employment difficulties for domestic workers:

“Right now with the global crisis, Spain is in a tremendous crisis. There are 6 million unemployed people. The crisis is most severe for the people that are recently arriving. And it is not like before when there were jobs. Now, the cleaning and caretaking jobs are few because the people hiring don't have money to employ domestic workers. Therefore, these jobs don't exist as much” (Personal interview, 2 July 2012).

Ecuadorian migrant women in Spain face a decrease in employment opportunities in the domestic service industry. The economic downturn has greatly diminished migrant women's ability to support themselves and their families while living abroad, forcing some to look for alternative options outside of Spain.

The Spanish government has instituted national reforms in response to the economic crisis with the expectation of alleviating national debt and encouraging economic growth. Some countries facing economic downturns and accumulating debt chose to devalue the currency as a form of economic policy. The devaluation works as a temporary measure because it makes the

country's exports more competitive on the international market and can help to foster increased exportation and generate national revenue. However, Spain cannot adopt this policy, much like other European Union countries such as Greece and Italy, who all use the Euro as their common currency. Spain, as a member of the European Union, is unable to devalue its currency to help attract export earnings and stabilize the national debt (Lin, Edvinsson, Chen, and Beding 2013).

Spain's government has adopted measures outside of currency devaluation to help curb national debt and decrease the government budget. The Spanish government, headed by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey, implemented conservative economic policies to help curb Spain's growing deficit. From 2004 up until 2011, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero served as Prime Minister as part of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party, upholding a leftist administration during his term. In 2011, the Spanish people elected Mariano Rajoy Brey of the more conservative People's Party. When Rajoy came to power, his policies aimed to decrease national debt included cutting the national budget by restricting some social services for the general population. Spain suffered from accumulating national debt that increased from 34 percent of GDP in 2008 to almost 70 percent of GDP in 2011 (International Monetary Fund 2012; World Bank 2012). In response, the government has begun to cut spending which has affected social services such as healthcare. The economic distress, unemployment, and vanishing social services have created hardships for Spanish nationals and even more so, for immigrants living in Spain. One policy has cut immigrants' access to public healthcare if they do not contribute to social security and is estimated to have affected 150,000 immigrants residing in Spain (Tremlett 2012). Migrants in Spain already confronting unemployment and outstanding debts have lost access to social welfare programs that help sustain them amidst economic struggles. With vanishing government-sponsored social welfare programs, many migrants have had to turn to

friends and family for economic support, or consider leaving Spain to look for better opportunities.

Migrants who were neither able to support themselves in Spain nor their families back in Ecuador chose one of three alternative options to improve their situation. First, some Ecuadorian migrants attempted to migrate to a different host country in search of work. Second, some Ecuadorians determined to stay in Spain reached out to their extended families back in Ecuador to ask for financial assistance. Family often sent “reverse remittances” from Ecuador to Spain so that migrants abroad could pay monthly bills in order to remain in Spain (“Las Remesas Ahora” 2012). Third, some Ecuadorian migrants who could not overcome the economic situation in Spain returned to Ecuador.

Census data confirms that “for every four Ecuadorians who migrated abroad from 2001-2010, one has returned to Ecuador” (International Organization for Migration 2012: 49). The five year period from 2005-2010 has produced almost 64,000 returned migrants who currently reside in Ecuador (International Organization for Migration 2012: 52). Moreover, the rate of return has increased and in 2012 alone, a total of 52,536 Ecuadorians returned from Spain to Ecuador (“52 Mil Ecuatorianos” 2013). Of the total Ecuadorian returned migrant population, approximately 46 percent have returned from Spain, and 29 percent of the total returned population has settled in the Pichincha province, concentrating in the capital city of Quito (International Organization for Migration 2012: 49). The returned migrant population in Ecuador has been increasing as Spain’s economic environment creates economic hardship for migrants and their families.

Women’s experiences while living in Spain are often juxtaposed to roles upheld in Ecuador. Some migrant women transform from stay-at-home wives to family breadwinners,

from mothers to transnational mothers, and from passive household authority figures to independent decision-makers. In this way, women's newly found roles as migrants causes females to reconstruct their identities as women, employees, wives, and mothers. Similarly, women also reconfigure roles and identities during the return process, when they adapt their activities to cultural and social expectations in Ecuador surrounding male and female behavior.

The next chapter examines both the challenges and opportunities that returned migrant women confront in Ecuador. Chapter four also examines government sponsored and NGO sponsored programs that provide support to female migrants to facilitate the reintegration process.

Chapter 4

The Reintegration Process: Reconfiguring Roles and Identities for Returned Migrant Women in Quito

In this chapter I analyze the experiences of Ecuadorian migrant women throughout the return process as they readjust to life in Ecuador. Taking into consideration the comprehensive migration process, I examine the women's experiences with migration and how returned female migrants construct their roles and identities during the *reintegration* process. First, I highlight the women's narratives to reveal to what extent women uphold roles and identities adopted in Spain when back in Ecuador. Second, I focus on the extent to which returned migrant women abandon roles and identities maintained in Spain as they conform to cultural expectations of gender roles and patriarchal authority in Ecuador. The women's narratives provide a space for them to describe the multifaceted identities and roles that they adopt when they return to Ecuador. Lastly, in their narratives, the women describe opportunities and challenges that they have confronted upon return. As part of the opportunities for returned female migrants, I focus on government and NGO institutions in Ecuador that work with migrant women and returned migrant women to emphasize how support programs should strive to strengthen opportunities for female empowerment upon return.

The Reintegration Process: Challenges and Opportunities

Ecuadorian returned migrant women have had to face many challenges and opportunities. They have had to reconcile and renegotiate their roles and identities within their families, communities, and Ecuadorian society at large. For women in particular, they experienced multiple influences during their migration careers that shaped their identities as women, mothers, wives, migrants, foreigners, and citizens (Arteaga 2010). Through their experiences abroad, it

has been shown that some returned migrants have the “capacity to innovate and to appear as actors of change” once back in their country of origin (Cassarino 2004: 259). For women, the ability to become an “actor of change” relates to how they actively construct and reconfigure their identities during migration and return. Female migrants adapt their roles and responsibilities to the needs that they encounter in the host country, which often results in a subsequent change in their level of personal autonomy. While in Spain, some female migrants adopt newly found roles as independent persons, decision-makers, employees, and household economic providers. In turn, these modified activities and perceptions of gendered roles are once again subject to negotiation upon the women’s return. Back in Ecuador, some women describe how patriarchy comes to rule again in the household as they are often relegated to the domestic sphere, the husband shares less responsibility than during migration, and they lose empowerment associated with being an economic earner in the family. However, returned migrant women who want to be “actors of change” want to maintain their newly constructed identities achieved while living in Spain when they return to Ecuador. Thus, some women want to transfer their empowering roles and experiences from Spain to Ecuador. In order to achieve this sustained empowerment, women want to look for jobs outside of the home, they want to have greater authority over family decision making, and they want greater independence.

Uncertainties Surrounding National Belonging: Returning Home as a “Foreigner”

Despite national ties to Ecuador, when female migrants spend greater amounts of time in Spain, they often establish connections that encouraged settlement abroad. Greater integration in Spain, in spite of continued feelings of foreignness, decreases Ecuadorian women’s intentions to return and creates increased detachment from Ecuador. One woman emphasizes how living in Spain can provoke feelings of non-belonging in Spain and in Ecuador:

“The obstacle is that you are neither from there [Ecuador] nor from here [Spain]. There are pros and cons. When you work here, there are moments when you feel like a foreigner. But, at the same time, if you go back to Ecuador, you are in your native country, but you also feel like a foreigner. That is the issue; we always live with the illusion of wanting to return. But the people stay here [in Spain]. When I talk to people, they all say, I want to return, I want to go back, but they don’t realize that they are saying this but living here” (Personal Interview, 15 September 2012).

Returned migrant women live in a limbo with respect to national belonging in Ecuador. After years spent living in Spain, women’s connection with Ecuador is reconfigured and can provoke feelings of discomfort associated with increased unfamiliarity with their home country. One woman, in her early thirties and married with two children, describes the fear associated with return and coming back to Ecuador with minimal connection to the country:

“Sometimes when I thought of going back to Ecuador, I got scared. It was like starting from zero. But then I thought about when I came to Spain and I was forced to start from zero, start from nothing. And at first I was very scared” (Personal interview, 6 July 2012).

The woman likens returning to Ecuador to migrating for the first time to Spain. During the return process, female migrants contend with feelings of “starting over” in an Ecuador from which they have become distant. Even though returned migrants come back to their home country, living abroad can weaken their connection to Ecuador, which can alienate returned migrants despite being citizens residing in their country of origin.

Employment Status: An Indicator of Economic Independence

Women’s employment in Spain allows female migrants to contribute to the household income. Not only do Ecuadorian women in Spain earn greater wages than they achieve in Ecuador, but their earnings grant them greater independence with respect to family expenditures. In Ecuador, men are expected to be the household breadwinner and have control over family finances. Meanwhile, women are responsible for the domestic chores and, if they work outside

of the home, their wages go towards food, clothing, and monthly bills with little surplus for luxury purchases. One woman, recently returned from Spain, describes changes in household authority over finances while living abroad:

“In my case, I gained more influence in the family. I would make decisions, direct my husband, and I used to drive a car. And my husband would always share money with me and let me manage my own money as I wanted. Before we left for Spain, he used to work and he would pay the rent and food. There [in Ecuador], I didn’t manage the household money; I never saw the money that he made. But here it is different” (Personal interview, 11 July 2012).

The same woman details how her increased authority over family expenditures in Spain decreases once again upon returning to Ecuador. She works as a stay-at-home mother in Ecuador while her husband remains in Spain working. She explains that not having a job in Ecuador creates financial strain and decreases independence with respect to family activities:

“The good thing about Spain is that I had my job. And it was dependable, I always got paid on time, I always got credit towards social security in Spain... When I had my earnings in my bank account, I used to say to my kids ‘Let’s go. Let’s go get a hamburger or an ice cream.’ But here [in Ecuador], I can’t do that. My youngest daughter asks me ‘Are we in a crisis right now? Why can’t we go out?’ I have to tell her no because I don’t have the money. Then she says to me ‘Let’s go back to Spain. There we had money and here we don’t’ (Personal interview, 11 July 2012).

Upon return, returned women have to adjust to restricted budgets as they no longer have access to the level of wages earned in Spain. However, this situation is exacerbated for returned female migrants who become stay-at-home mothers or are unemployed in Ecuador. Women lose economic independence gained through migrant wages in Spain and, moreover, lose household authority when they stop being economic earners for the family. Five of the ten returned women confront this challenge as they transition from being employed in Spain with steady wages to being a stay-at-home wife or mother. Without employment outside of the home, these women must defer economic authority as they depend on the husbands to maintain the household.

Feminized migration allows Ecuadorian women an outlet to claim greater authority as economic earners in the family. Migrant women have the ability to surpass gender-based constructions that relegate women to the domestic sphere and bestow men with greater household authority as the family breadwinner. When migrant women return to Ecuador and don't have jobs, they lack the financial resources enjoyed abroad that granted them greater independence as women, wives, and mothers. Therefore, women undergo multiple reconfigurations of identity related to degrees of economic autonomy throughout the migration process. Specifically, greater economic influence gained abroad is often unsustainable upon return.

Reconfiguring Domestic Responsibilities: Changes in Household Roles

In her research on Mexican immigrants in the U.S., Hondagneu-Sotelo finds that “many of the immigrant families... exhibited more egalitarian gender relations in household divisions of labor, family decision-making processes, and women’s spatial mobility” (1994: 98).

Hondagneu-Sotelo elaborates further that these changes reflect “how gender relations are both reconstructed and selectively reproduced through migration and resettlement” (1994: 98). In the Ecuadorian case, returned migrant women also expressed an increased sharing of domestic responsibilities during their time in Spain. Both married Ecuadorian women who migrated unaccompanied and those who migrated to Spain with their husbands and children noted men’s greater contributions to domestic chores.

Among the ten returned migrant women, seven were married at the time they left for Spain and three were single. Additionally, seven of the ten women were mothers with at least one child at the time of migration. With respect to the migrant mothers, five left their children in Ecuador and two took their children with them to Spain. Regarding family separation, six of the

ten returned female migrants left for Spain unaccompanied and settled abroad with no immediate family members while four women migrated with family. Of the four women who migrated with family, three migrated with their husbands and one migrated with her husband and children as a nuclear family. Of the six women who migrated independently, three left their husbands behind in Ecuador. As illustrated, most of the women endured some form of family separation during their time in Spain. The majority of women who left for Spain migrated independently and in those cases, often left their children behind in Ecuador. Women's independent migration reflects a broader trend of the feminization of Ecuadorian migration. Unlike previous waves of male-led migration followed by women as secondary migrants, females migrate in greater numbers as primary migrants.

Wives with husbands abroad and husbands back in Ecuador, especially those with children, reconfigured domestic responsibilities to adjust for migration. In Spain, all ten of the women worked full time and, if they lived with their husbands abroad, the men also worked full time. In the dual-earner households in Spain, women reported a greater sharing of responsibilities with their husbands as compared to living in Ecuador. Before leaving for Spain, six of the seven married women reported that they were responsible for all domestic tasks related to cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and caring for the children. Upon migration, all seven women received greater collaboration from their husbands with domestic chores, either helping more while living in Spain, or taking on greater household responsibility in Ecuador in the wives' absence. Upon return, five of the seven women claim that they, once again, have sole responsibility for carrying out all domestic tasks.

Three different trends occurred among the women and their husbands to explain the fluctuation in shared domestic duties. First, one returned migrant explained that her husband had

helped with the household before her departure and while she was in Spain, he took on greater responsibility and cared for their two children. However, when she returned, he decreased his contribution towards helping with domestic tasks:

“When I left my husband had to start doing more in the house. My children also had to help, especially my daughter with cleaning and making the beds. But my husband did the cooking when I left, and he used to help before I left. Because of this, I decided to leave. I knew he was very responsible in the house...When I came back from Spain, I had to take over all of the responsibilities of the house. When I got back, my husband washed his hands of all the household work. He made me work really hard. It was difficult, but yeah, you know how it is” (Personal interview, 30 June 2012).

In this case, the husband regressed with respect to sharing household responsibilities upon the wife’s return. Despite his help before her departure and while she was in Spain, he did not maintain his contribution to housework throughout the return process.

The second trend involves a temporary reconfiguration of the division of domestic responsibilities between men and women during migration. When the women come back to Ecuador, the former responsibilities upheld during migration are followed by a return to pre-departure conditions in which the wife realized all domestic chores. Men and women often shared greater household responsibilities in Spain out of necessity since both partners worked long hours outside of the home, which required greater cooperation from both individuals. Additionally, the returned migrant women also described the reconfiguration of domestic responsibilities in terms of cultural differences in Spain and Ecuador with respect to gender construction. One Ecuadorian woman elaborates on differences in gender-specific expectations for men and women:

“The women in Spain, the Spaniards are much more liberal than women in Ecuador. When Spanish women work, they work for themselves. And if they feel like going out on a Friday or a Saturday, then the husbands stay home and watch the kids while they are outside of the house. They also share the work more with respect to childcare. They

divide the work more. But here in Ecuador, we women are more reserved, more humble, more domestic than women in Spain” (Personal interview, 11 July 2012).

The temporal reconfiguration of household authority and sharing of responsibilities reflects Bastia and Busse’s findings among returned female migrants in Bolivia and Peru (2011). Bastia and Busse found that migrant women had greater household authority and autonomy abroad. However, when the women returned to their country of origin, females adopted roles that upheld patriarchal practices that assigned women to the domestic sphere and decreased their overall independence and their authority over household decision making (Bastia and Busse 2011).

The third trend reveals the maintenance of shared domestic responsibilities adopted in Spain while living back in Ecuador. One returned migrant woman, who lived in Spain with her husband and children, discusses how her family distributes domestic chores in Ecuador:

“My husband and I were both responsible for cleaning and cooking in Spain. My husband learned how to do these things over in Spain. Here, in Ecuador, you have to clean, iron, cook, and take care of the kids. The man earns the money. That is a man here. But there, no. Men have to learn to help in Spain. Now, we share responsibilities and my children contribute as well. If I need help making rice or something for lunch, I can ask my husband or my children to help. Here, some of the women are more open and more liberal. But there in Spain, the woman is in charge. She decides what she wants to do” (Personal interview, 18 July 2012).

This woman’s experience also reveals how gender operates in Spain and in Ecuador with respect to expectations for men’s and women’s roles in the family. Despite the social construction of gender in Ecuador that assigns men the breadwinner roles and women the domestic sphere, this couple highlights the third trend where husbands maintain increased household collaboration upon return to Ecuador. The migration process creates a sustainable reconfiguration of gender-specific responsibilities. In these cases, women benefit because they maintain a more equal division of household labor than they experienced before migration.

Opportunities for Support: Government and NGO Programs for Returned Migrants

Amidst decreased migration to Spain and the 2008 economic crisis, both Spain and Ecuador have established government sponsored programs to aid Ecuadorian migrants' departure from Spain and return to Ecuador. The Spanish government hosts a program called the Immigrant Voluntary Return Plan (*Plan de Retorno Voluntario de Inmigrantes*) that offers to finance the return flight home for migrants to the country of origin. The plan stipulates that migrant participants who accept the flight cannot return to Spain within three years of the departure. Ecuador's president Rafael Correa established the National Migrant Secretary (*Secretaria Nacional del Migrante*, SENAMI) in 2007 which offers a pilot program named "Welcome Home" (*Bienvenidos a Casa*). This program helps with logistics of return such as shipping household goods from Spain to Ecuador and offering start-up grants for selected microenterprises run by returned migrants. The "menaje de casa" (household goods) component of the "Welcome Home" plan allows migrants to transport their possessions accumulated in Spain to Ecuador without having to pay any customs tax (Personal interview, 29 June 2013). The small-business grants are part of *Fondo el Cucayo* (Cucayo Fund) in which returned migrants can submit a business plan and receive up to \$15,000 in funding towards starting up a microenterprise in Ecuador. The migrant themselves must demonstrate the ability to contribute 75 percent of the total costs for the business and the Cucayo Fund contributes 25 percent of the cost up to \$15,000 (Personal interview, 13 June 2012). The Cucayo Fund is run as a contest where, once a year, SENAMI chooses recipients to receive financial grants for business start-ups. According to one SENAMI staff member, approximately 20 percent of all applications are chosen to receive funding (Personal interview, 29 June 2012). In addition, SENAMI connects returned migrants with credit and loan opportunities through *El Banco del Migrante*

(Migrant's Bank), where returned migrants can apply for up to \$20,000 to finance a household remodeling project, a microenterprise project, or a business. The loans have to be paid back in full within four years and typically carry an annual interest rate between 11 and 14 percent.

SENAMI continues to offer assistance programs for returned migrants. However, returned migrants' participation rate in SENAMI programs is relatively low compared to the overall returned migrant population in Ecuador. In 2010, since SENAMI's inception, "Some 8,870 expatriates have been facilitated in returning home. Out of these returnees, however, the cases related to 'productive incentives' (i.e. subsidized entrepreneurs) were just 540, and those returning in voluntarily—rather than because of deportation, or utter deprivation—were about 3,300" (Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011: 291). These SENAMI beneficiaries represent a small percentage of the 64,000 returned migrants who came back to Ecuador from 2005 to 2010 (International Organization for Migration 2012: 52). Additionally, some critics of the programs argue that President Correa established the office as a public relations strategy (Margheritis 2011). People believe that SENAMI serves as a tool to show commitment to the Ecuadorian migrant population to garner support for the Ecuadorian economy through remittances from abroad. This is particularly important as remittances reached over \$3 billion in 2007 and represent Ecuador's second largest source of national revenue behind oil export sales (Herrera 2008; Margheritis 2011).

The Office of Migration and Human Mobility is part of the provincial government and operates from its office headquarters in Quito. This government office is separate from SENAMI and offers programs that consist of helping returned migrants gain access to microcredit loans, helping migrants in vulnerable economic situations find access to subsidized housing, offering literacy programs for illiterate returned migrants, and helping returned

migrants with recommendations for access to healthcare for themselves and their family members (Personal interview, 2 July 2012). Migrants who visit the office are mainly concentrated in Quito but the office staff travel to different provinces in Ecuador in order to speak with migrants, migrant families, and refugees about the services they provide.

Furthermore, a non-governmental organization that helps with the reintegration of returned migrants is the Hope Foundation (*Fundación Esperanza*). The Hope Foundation was founded in Colombia and currently has offices in Colombia and in Ecuador. The Hope Foundation focuses on educating girls and women about the opportunities and challenges associated with migration and teaching them about the potential dangers of human trafficking and sexual slavery. The offices in Colombia and Ecuador also provide a 24-hour hotline and services for victims of human trafficking, child exploitation, sexual slavery, and female refugees. The foundation runs public awareness campaigns and travels to different provinces throughout Ecuador to educate children and youth in elementary and high schools about human rights associated with migration. With respect to returned migrants, the Hope Foundation helps women have been victims of human trafficking or sexual exploitation when they come back to Ecuador. The Hope Foundation collaborates with private institutions and other NGOs to provide psychological and legal assistance for returned migrant victims to aid them throughout the reintegration process. In 2012, the Hope Foundation has begun to offer four-day workshops to teach returned migrant women how to apply for SENAMI's Cucayo Fund to receive financial assistance for starting a business. Representatives from the Hope Foundation have assisted 20 returned migrant women with the applications, of which two women have been chosen as grant recipients.

Additionally, the Hispanic-Ecuadorian Rumiñahui Association (*Asociación Rumiñahui Hispano-Ecuatoriana*) is another NGO that operates with four offices in Spain and one office in Quito, Ecuador. The mission of the association is to orient Ecuadorian migrants in Spain to assist in finding housing, employment, and help with settlement upon arrival to Spain. Services are also offered to Ecuadorian migrants to teach them about their legal rights as migrants in their place of employment and with respect to gaining access to social welfare services offered in Spain. The association helps to educate migrants on requirements towards gaining legal residency while living in Spain. Ecuadorian migrants in Spain who want to apply for Spain's Immigrant Voluntary Return Plan can receive assistance from the Rumiñahui Association's offices in Spain. The Quito office serves as a base for communicating with the association's offices in Spain to help facilitate the logistics of Ecuadorian migrants return trip to Ecuador.

Finally, the Ecuadorian Center for Female Advancement and Action (*Centro Ecuatoriano para la Promoción y Acción de la Mujer* [CEPAM]) is an NGO that provides legal and psychological support to women. Specifically, CEPAM assists women with issues surrounding domestic violence, divorce, and delinquent children. CEPAM provides counseling and therapy for women and their families with staff psychologists and also provides legal counsel for women involved in court cases surrounding domestic violence or divorce (Personal interview, 11 July 2012). Furthermore, CEPAM has also started working with returned migrant women to provide psychological support as females reunite with their families after being separated through migration. Returned migrant women and their families can receive counseling through CEPAM to deal with reunification challenges between wives and husbands as well as mothers and children. In this way, CEPAM assists returned migrant women with family reunification during the reintegration process.

Government sponsored programs and NGO sponsored programs in Ecuador for returned migrants include assistance with bringing household goods from Spain, gaining access to bank loans, applying for small business start-up grants, finding legal counsel in cases of exploitation during migration, receiving assistance with subsidized housing, and obtaining psychological support surrounding family reunification. These programs offer a range of programs that benefit returned migrants and have the potential to provide specific gains for women. SENAMI's Cucayo Fund gives women the opportunity to gain funding towards starting their own business. Women who are chosen to participate in this program maintain their status as household economic earners and also become more independent as female business owners. Moreover, returned migrants have access to loans through The Migrant's Bank that can fund a money-making project or microenterprise venture, which can lead to economic independence and empowerment for women in Ecuador. Additionally, returned migrant women who experience issues and problems surrounding family reunification in Ecuador can receive psychological counseling through CEPAM. Mothers who leave children behind in Ecuador while they live in Spain often return to confront rebellious sons and daughters who resent their mother's absence and lose respect for her household authority. The counseling services can help families to reconfigure household roles with respect to the mother's reestablished presence. Psychological support for returned mothers and children can ensure that women maintain authority over their children, who, in turn, are expected to respect their mothers. Moreover, CEPAM provides legal support and psychological counseling for returned migrant women who seek a divorce from their husbands, specifically for women who suffer from domestic abuse. If women return to Ecuador and experience abuse upon reunification with their husbands, CEPAM provides assistance in facilitating the separation process. Lastly, The Office of Migration and Human Mobility helps

returned migrant women gain access to microfinance programs through community banks and cooperatives to secure loans. These short-term microloans can equip women with money to meet basic needs for their families, as migrants often return with limited savings. In this way, women do not have to depend upon family members for economic support upon return.

Ecuadorian programs for returned migrants have the potential to offer women the opportunity to maintain their empowering roles adopted in Spain and reconfigure them to adapt to the Ecuadorian context. However, there are several ways in which programs for returned migrants in Ecuador could be further developed and improved in order to provide more diversified assistance for the return migrant population and, in particular, Ecuadorian females coming back from Spain.

First, programs for returned migrants could expand to offer assistance with job searches and job placement to help individuals network and learn about employment opportunities. Returned migrant women who want to search for a job in Ecuador in order to provide them with economic empowerment and greater independence have limited opportunities for support through government and NGO programs. If a female returned migrant has the education, knowledge, and know-how for starting a business in Ecuador, programs that offer opportunities for funding through loans and grants are an excellent resource. However, programs that offer loans or grants to start a small business need to consider that not all returned migrants have the education or the experience required to access these forms of assistance. Many migrants, men and women, worked jobs in Spain that gave them work experience, but not the business knowledge that is necessary to run a small company or microenterprise. When I spoke with staff members from government offices and NGO offices regarding current programs, one representative spoke about returned migrants' needs:

“When they [returned migrants] come back, at first, it’s all one big party and everyone is celebrating their return. The problem comes after when they have to begin the reintegration process. The country that they left is not the same country they come back to. Ecuador, from 10 years ago with the banking crisis, is not the Ecuador of now... The issue is that many migrants don’t work as businessmen when they go to Europe. They don’t work in a managerial position. They work as domestic workers, they work in construction, and they work in agriculture. It is a dependent work. They come back here, and it doesn’t mean that just because they worked in construction, they can become a successful businessman here” (Personal interview, 10 July 2012).

As shown, employment-related programs for returned migrants need to expand to include job search training and support for non-managerial positions.

Furthermore, women have varying employment needs based on their work experience, educational background, and where they are in their “life-course.” For example, a high-school educated woman in her fifties with four children confronts different challenges and opportunities than a single, childless, female university graduate in her twenties. One Ecuadorian woman, who is currently unemployed but looking for work in Quito, describes what type of assistance she would like to receive based on her current situation:

“It would be a fantastic thing if current programs would focus on giving us ideas on how to help us start over again. We are starting over, from zero. We have to start from nothing like how we started over there. Many people have families or contacts, if they are younger and want to look for jobs. But for older people like me, I am 56 years old; we aren’t accepted in some jobs because of our age. But we still have to look for a way to make a living here. So it would be nice if they provided us with rehabilitation courses to show us what opportunities are available. They could ask us what skills and training we have, what work have we done in order to find a job or start a business” (Personal interview, 18 July 2012).

Future programs that address women’s employment needs in Ecuador should take into account the varying levels of education, training, and experience that returned female migrants have in addition to their age, marital status, and whether they are a mother/non-mother. These factors can influence a woman’s job search strategies with respect to her ability to work full-time versus

part-time, her ability to obtain childcare, her potential to network with employers, and her ability to travel for work. Programs need to give women the appropriate training and tools to address individual circumstances surrounding each woman's needs with acquiring a job.

Second, programs could offer training workshops or classes for returned migrants that teach about starting a business. Even though most migrants don't return with the necessary experience to open a small business, government sponsored or NGO sponsored training could equip return migrants with the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. In this way, more returned migrants could be eligible to apply for loans and grants aimed at entrepreneurship.

Third, programs should also consider adopting a quota system to ensure that an equal number of men and women receive funding towards starting their own business. With a quota system, returned female migrants will be given equal access to opportunities for creating a microenterprise. These opportunities would allow a greater number of women to establish themselves as successful economic earners and independent businesswomen in Ecuador.

Fourth, programs should focus on providing a space for men and women to speak about their experiences as migrants with respect to newly founded roles and identities abroad. Men, women, and children need support when transitioning from living abroad, or being separated through migration, to living again as a family in Ecuador with respect to negotiating household roles and responsibilities. Many women want to bring back what they gained while living in Spain—skills, practical experience, and job training as well as the psychological aspects such as empowerment, feelings of independence, and sharing the decision-making process within the family. Employment outside of the home is only one aspect of how women adopt empowering roles while in Spain. Migrant women also gain greater authority and autonomy in the household

through reconfigured roles, which are often influenced by cultural expectations of gender surrounding men and women in Spain.

When women return to Ecuador, they have greater difficulty maintaining the roles they adopted in Spain due to Ecuadorians' traditional beliefs surrounding gendered practices, which associate men with the household authority role and women with greater submissiveness. One female migrant, who is still living in Spain, describes differences between behaviors for Ecuadorian women in Spain and in Ecuador:

“If I return to Ecuador one day, I do worry about adjusting to the customs there. Here [in Spain], the women speak up; they make themselves heard. In Ecuador the women still are very reserved when speaking. We Ecuadorian women here are something different. I don't know, there they are very tied to tradition. It scares me. I have a friend who lives in Germany and her boyfriend is German. When she goes to visit Ecuador, it is very difficult for her because people tell her that she speaks in a strong manner, or when she tries to make a decision, people don't take her seriously” (Personal interview, 15 September 2012).

As described above, Ecuadorian women living in Spain are different from Ecuadorian women living in their home country. These differences arise as cultural expectations in the two countries influence women's roles and identities.

Fifth, psychological support for returned migrant women should consider expanding services to provide assistance that focuses on female empowerment. Current programs in Ecuador that provide psychological support for returned female migrants are a valuable resource. However, the assistance focuses primarily on issues surrounding domestic abuse and delinquent children, which is a much needed form of support for women enduring these very difficult situations. Programs could further develop to help women develop strategies to maintain their empowering roles adopted abroad as they adjust to living in Ecuador. Assistance programs should involve not only women, but entire families to educate parents, spouses, and children

about household reconfiguration upon return and support families throughout the process. If returned migrant women want to transfer their role as an independent decision-maker with greater authority, the entire household needs education and support to help women achieve this goal.

Finally, returned migrant women should be directly involved in developing support programs. These women, through their personal experiences with the reintegration process, would be an invaluable resource to provide suggestions and feedback for how to expand programs and facilitate sustained female empowerment during the reintegration process. The government sponsored and NGO sponsored programs need to collaborate with returned migrants to evaluate current services and develop strategies for future assistance as the returned migrant population in Ecuador is increasing.

The returned migrant women face varying opportunities and challenges as they return to Ecuador with different roles, identities, and expectations than when they initially immigrated to Spain. While some of the women describe how they return to Ecuador with new roles that facilitate greater empowerment, others express how their authority gained abroad is not sustainable when they return home. Fortunately, there are programs available to support returned migrant women throughout their reintegration process. These forms of assistance offer a solid foundation upon which future services could develop to accommodate the needs of an increasingly diverse returned migrant population. In order to insure a successful reintegration process for returned migrant women, they need the opportunity to collaborate with government and NGOs to create, adjust, and expand support programs.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Summary

Ecuadorian emigration has evolved within the past fifty years to include a larger and more diversified migrant population. The initial wave of pioneer migrants, consisting of men from Southern rural Ecuador, established international ties with the U.S. that facilitated future migration. During the 1990s, economic and political turmoil in Ecuador created a volatile situation for Ecuadorians in the cities and the countryside. Neoliberal policies that advocated for the reduction in public services, privatization of government entities, and dollarization to curb inflation resulted in increased inequality, greater unemployment, and financial instability for the Ecuadorian population. In response, Ecuadorians turned to emigration as a strategy for escaping the precarious conditions in their home country.

In the late 1990s, Ecuadorian migration not only peaked in quantity but also changed with respect to the preferred country for settlement. Variations in the receiving countries' migration policies and labor demand created a shift in Ecuadorians' preferred destination from the U.S. to Spain. Additionally, women gained greater representation among the Ecuadorian migrant population in Spain. Throughout the migration process, Ecuadorian women underwent changes with respect to their roles and their identity as females, migrants, wives, and mothers. Women contended with outsider status in Spain, family separation, and employment in low-skill, low-wage sectors. While abroad, Ecuadorian migrant women's fluctuating roles produced a reconfiguration of identity and authority within the family. Female migrants' earnings provided economic autonomy and empowerment which, in the household, translated into greater independence from male partners and greater influence over family decisions.

In Spain, the global economic crisis has created rampant unemployment and decreased social services, which has forced some Ecuadorian migrant women to return to Ecuador. During the return process, similar to the migration process, females experience a reconfiguration of their roles and identity as they adapt to conditions back in Ecuador after spending years abroad. Ecuadorian women return to their native country with different roles and identity than when they departed. Ultimately, returned female migrants must reconcile their experiences as migrants with their re-established lives in Ecuador in order to reintegrate into Ecuadorian society. However, for many Ecuadorian women, the struggles confronted during the return process revolve around surrendering authority and independence gained abroad. Ecuadorian returned migrants need support and assistance in gaining access to opportunities and developing strategies for maintaining their empowerment when coming home to Ecuador.

Contribution

My research explores migration and return as a comprehensive process that influences women's daily lives. I contribute to the understanding of how the migration experience shapes roles and identities for Ecuadorian women while abroad and upon return. Using Ecuadorian returned migrant women as my case study, I expand upon previous research that focuses exclusively on Latin American women's settlement abroad. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's study of Mexican male and female migrants living in the U.S. serves as the foundation to analyze identity reformation among migrant women. Hondagneu-Sotelo argues that "Immigration and settlement processes temper the expression of family patriarchy, eliciting a general trend toward greater egalitarianism. Women still have less power than men do in families, but they generally enjoy more autonomy, resources, and leverage than they previously did in Mexico" (1994: 196). My research extends beyond settlement abroad to encompass female identity reconfiguration

during the return process and reintegration into the country of origin. I analyze how women's changing roles and identities during migration and upon return reveal to what extent migrant women's power gained abroad is sustained when they return to their native country. Amidst the current global economic crisis, many Western immigrant receiving countries are struggling with high unemployment and stunted economic growth. As a result, migrants unable to support themselves abroad search for settlement in an alternative host country or return to their country of origin. My research also contributes to the emerging scholarship on return migration that explores migrants' transition to their home country after living years abroad.

My interviews with returned migrant women allow the Ecuadorian women to narrate their personal experiences with the return process and highlight the challenges and opportunities that they confront in Ecuador. In addition, my interviews with government offices and NGOs reveal how programs for returned migrant women offer specific forms of assistance during the reintegration process. Current programs offer opportunities for some returned migrant women but could be developed further to provide expanded services for the diversified needs of returned migrants. Ecuadorian women need assistance with finding employment, which ultimately provides females with greater opportunities for economic empowerment, greater authority in the family, and increased independence. Returned female migrants also need psychological support and a safe space to network with other returned migrant women. This would allow females to share their collective experiences and provide support to one another with common struggles confronted throughout the return process. It could be advantageous if organizations included workshops and activities that encourage networking among returned migrants in order to foster support among Ecuadorians who are coming home after years abroad.

Limitations

Due to the time constraints during my field work, I was only able to conduct twenty-four interviews in total. More time in Quito would have allowed for a greater number of interviews and would have added to the significance of my research. Specifically, I would have increased the number of interviews with returned migrant women to substantiate data focused on the return process. Additionally, I had greater success finding women to interview using informal networks, rather than soliciting contact information for returned migrants through federal government institutions. The bureaucratic formalities required to access information often resulted in significant waiting periods or refusals, which limited my success in finding interview candidates. Lastly, more time in the field would have allowed me to coordinate a group interview to bring the returned migrant women together to discuss the return process as a group. This would have allowed the women a space to emphasize shared struggles and offer collective suggestions for effective support programs to offer returned female migrants when transitioning back to Ecuador.

Future Work

In 2013, Ecuadorians continue to leave Spain and return to Ecuador. Due to the increased number of returned migrants, government organizations and NGOs need to evaluate current programs to determine to what extent returned migrants, men and women, receive support that effectively addresses their needs. As returned female migrants face diminished empowerment upon return, future research should focus specifically on how to provide these women with services to foster sustained autonomy gained while living abroad. Programs should also take into account to what extent women outside of Quito have access to assistance offered through government organizations and NGOs. A comparative study of returned migrant women

in Quito and Guayaquil, the two largest sending cities for Ecuadorian migrants, would highlight the availability of programs to urban women living outside of the capital city. Furthermore, an expanded study that includes the experiences of returned female migrants from smaller cities and rural areas can provide a diversified sample to highlight the variations among women's experiences during return.

With respect to gender and reconfigured identities among female migrants, future studies should not only focus on the experience abroad but extend scholarship to encompass the return experience. Despite coming home to their country of origin, returned migrant women arrive with an altered perspective of their role in the family and society at large. Moreover, women who live abroad for ten years or more often return to an unknown Ecuador where they themselves feel like an outsider. Returned female migrants need support in reconciling their migrant experience with their re-established presence in Ecuador in order to feel empowered. Scholarship that examines programs for returned migrant women should advocate for support mechanisms that foster and facilitate female empowerment in Ecuador. Research needs to explore how women's migration experiences can transform into meaningful practices that shape female identity in Ecuador in a positive way.

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Appendix I

Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews with Ecuadorian Migrant Women

- 1) When did you migrate to Spain?
- 2) Did you migrate alone or accompanied?
- 3) Who in your family stayed in Ecuador when you migrated to Spain? (husband, parents, siblings, children, etc.)
- 4) Why did you decide to migrate? What were your motivations?
- 5) Why did you decide to return to Ecuador? What were your motivations?
- 6) When you lived in Ecuador, before migrating, how was your relationship with your family?
- 7) When you lived in Spain, how did your relationship with your family change?
- 8) When you returned to Ecuador, how did your relationship with your family change?
- 9) Have you had problems with your family since you migrated?
- 10) Now that you have returned to Ecuador, do you have problems with your family?
- 11) When you lived in Ecuador, what kind of work did you do?
- 12) What type of work did you do in Spain?
- 13) Now that you have returned to Ecuador, what type of work do you do?
- 14) What type of responsibilities did you have outside of your work in Spain? Were they different than the responsibilities that you had and have in Ecuador?
- 15) What do you think are the differences between women in Spain and women who live in Ecuador?
- 16) With respect to being a woman, would you prefer to live in Spain or in Ecuador?
- 17) Have you faced any obstacles in Spain with respect to being a migrant women? Being a woman?
- 18) Do you think that you will stay here in Ecuador or return to Spain?
- 19) What are your perceptions about the experience of being a female Ecuadorian migrant in Spain?
- 20) What are your perceptions about the experience of being a returned female Ecuadorian migrant, living in Ecuador again?
- 21) What were the advantages and disadvantages of living and working in Spain?
- 22) What are the advantages and disadvantages of being back in Ecuador?
- 23) Did you receive any assistance upon your return to Ecuador? (family, foundations, governments, etc.)