Introduction

In early October 2004, I was rushing through Miami airport just off the plane from Lima. A local hurricane warning had delayed flights out of Lima and passengers were worried about making connecting flights. Rounding a corner, I saw to my despair that in the passage ahead was a mass of international travelers, which a U.S. Immigration (USCIS) officer was trying to divide into a “citizens and residents only” line and another line for everyone else. She explained that because of the hurricane warning the lines for immigration were unusually long and requested that all passengers wait patiently in line.

A group of Limeños in front of me, with all the typical markers of class entitlement, style, and embodied affect that in Peru defines a pituco—or upper-class Peruvian—started to joke amongst themselves about the Puerto Rican USCIS officer. They laughed about her looks and her español masticado (“chewed” or broken Spanish). One woman from the Peruvian group said: “And Puerto Ricans, where do they go?” The comment amused her friends because it played on common stereotypes among Latin Americans about U.S.-born Puerto Ricans as culturally and linguistically deficient (cf. Ramos-Zayas 2003).

Soon, a second USCIS officer—also Latino—appeared onsite to enforce the ordering of the two lines and to help the citizen line to move forward. The people in my line (noncitizens) were restless and started voicing complaints. The same Peruvian woman stepped out of line to stretch her back but was immediately asked by the second immigration officer to remain in line. She turned to her husband and said indignantly: “Paul, imagínate, hasta aquí hemos venido para que nos traten como cholos” (“Imagine Paul, we have come all this way to be treated as cholos”). A cholo in Peru generally refers to a person of indigenous origins in the urban environment who has adopted urban manners and lifestyles, but the term carries a derogatory connotation because of its “in betweenness” in ethnic and political terms (Larson 2005).
me, a man I'd talked to briefly at the Lima airport asked for permission to come through; Jorge, a long-term Miami resident, was originally from the highland city of Huancayo, and had an undeniable phenotypic “Indi-
anness.” He sported expensive baggy jeans, a Tommy Hilfiger shirt, and a designer watch. He was waving his U.S. passport to get to the proper line; while passing through he accidentally bumped into the woman in front of me. Her immediate and visceral reaction said it all: “¡Y este, qué se cree, cholo de miércoles!” (“And this guy, who does he think he is, piece-of-shit cholo!”). It was inconceivable to an upper-class white Peruvian that a “simple cholo” could access the preferential treatment of the citizenship line, while she herself had to stand with her pituco friends in the line of alien others. I do not know if Jorge heard the woman’s comment and if so, how he felt about it, but the incident stayed with me for the duration of my fieldwork and long after. It is a constant reminder of the barriers faced by those Peruvians who trace their origins to the Andean highlands when striving to reinvent themselves as cosmopolitan and transnational subjects. Most migrants do not end up, like Jorge, in the citizens and residents line, but all run afoul of the resentments of the Lima elites who experience the new upward and outward mobility of Andean Peruvians, which is the subject of this book, as a kind of “pass-
ing” and a threat and affront to their own presumed whiteness and their long-term and “higher class” cosmopolitanism.

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This book examines the experiences, practices, and imaginaries of trans-
national migration and mobility among Andean Peruvians who between the late 1980s and around 2010 sought to extend their livelihoods, first from rural villages to Peru’s cities, and then beyond Peru’s borders. Based on ethnographic research carried out over a period of several years in rural communities of the Mantaro Valley in Peru’s central high-
lands, and following migrants from that area, in the Peruvian cities of Huancayo, Lima, and the U.S. destinations of Miami, Washington, D.C., and Paterson, New Jersey, I depict here the experiences of those persons I came to know well. Drawing on this material as a series of extended case studies and upon more general social theory and scholarship on migration, mobility, circulation, and exchange, I examine the social organization of migration, the forces driving it, and the images that
migrants produce and circulate of themselves through communicative practice and exchange between Peru and the United States. Focusing on the relationship of social practice and cultural and technological mediation, I argue that social relations among transnational migrants and those with whom they engage throughout the migration process are mediated by images, objects, practices, and by an expanding reach of Andean cultural forms. I demonstrate how the difficulty of maintaining meaningful transnational lives in today’s world is embedded in the form and process of always-partial communication between migrants, their families, their communities, and the state. The situated representations of self and Other that are produced within these relationships operate centrally in shaping how indigenous and rural migrants strive to become mobile and are also key to how these migrants reenvision their communities and themselves in the contemporary global and interconnected world through migration.

While globalization since the 1970s has facilitated the circulation of goods and of privileged subjects, it has also brought about constraints on the mobility of laboring men and women, making the global circulation of human bodies inherently limited and contingent. This development is evident in the increased policing of international borders and in the production of new racialized boundaries both in migrant-sending and receiving contexts (De Genova 2002, 2010; Fassin 2011; Inda 2006; Chávez 2008). Within this global scenario only some bodies can circulate without major obstacles to their mobility. Others constantly evoke suspicion and are perceived as threats. Yet the ideological and moral coding of the mobility of the subaltern as negative is hardly novel. Since colonial times the mobility of the indigenous subject within the colonial and later republican social order and imagination has been perceived as deeply problematic. Framed as the antithesis first of Spanishness, then of whiteness, indigenous migrants in cities were deliberately excluded from “decent” city centers and from participating as citizens in urban political life (Larson 2005). Relegated to precarious lives in peripheral neighborhoods, and tolerated only because of the need for their labor, migrants in cities were largely treated as contaminants, as “matter out of place” (Douglas 1978), and a threat to civilized society (Weismantel 2001; Wilson 2004). Such images of Andean indigenous subjects as quintessentially “antimodern” and “antiurban” were revived during the
massive rural-to-urban migration from the Andes to Lima starting in the mid-twentieth century and again by the threat of violence during the 1980s era of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) during which the displacement of Andean peasants to Peru’s cities was regarded as a burden on the nation and a problem to be solved. A structurally similar coding of the mobility of the subaltern as profoundly unsettling also appears in contemporary contexts of Latin American migration to metropolitan centers in the United States and Europe. Here, Latin American migrants are frequently portrayed, in the words of anthropologist Jonathan Xavier Inda, as “parasite[s] intruding on the body of the host nation, drawing nutrients from it, while providing nothing to its survival and even threatening its well-being” (2000:47).

This book shows that such long-standing encodings of mobility figure centrally in the particular articulations through which recent Andean migrants from the central highlands of Peru remake themselves and are remade through transnational migration by larger structures, institutions, and technologies. Often unsuccessful in obtaining visas on their own via official bureaucratic procedures, lower class and indigenous Peruvians from the Andean highlands pursue transnational mobility within this political and racial global economy by turning to the services of “migration professionals” to help them get their migration projects off the ground. These services include help with acquiring bank accounts, passports, visas, and guidance on how to camouflage their rural or marginal urban demeanor that otherwise would place them squarely on the rejection list when applying for a U.S. visa in Lima. This involves cultivating the ability to embody the ease that comes with the taken-for-granted privilege of state-authorized mobility. Aspiring migrants who seek to travel to international destinations in the post-9/11 political and racial economy are well aware of this need to compensate for their ostensible excess of rural or marginal urban markers and the alleged liability of their claims to mobility, citizenship, and belonging. They constantly evaluate the friction produced by the mobility of their bodies through space as they navigate multiple social positionings within larger power dynamics that shape the transnational circulation of human bodies.

Peruvians migrate to foreign destinations for a variety of reasons, including economic ones. Yet for many of the Peruvians from the Mantaro
Valley I have come to know over the course of the research process, the quest for transnational migration and mobility is much more than just an economic project. It is a cultural and class aspiration, and a demand for citizenship status and belonging which is at the very center of the always-unfinished process of social becoming. This aspiration to mobility, I argue, aims to overcome centuries-old urban constructions of indigenous Peruvians and their urban cholo counterparts as rural, backward, and essentially unfit for citizenship, metropolitan modernity, and international travel, which until recent decades was monopolized by Peru’s elites. The possibility for Andean Peruvians of modest means to migrate to distant countries is relatively new and constitutes an important practice through which migrants attempt to not just reproduce but also transform their predicament.

Peruvian Migration and Its Contexts

For most of the twentieth century the migration of indigenous and working-class Peruvians occurred within Peru. These Peruvians left their rural towns and communities to search for new opportunities, education for their children, and more modern lifestyles in the mining centers, the provincial capitals of the Andes, or in the nation’s capital, Lima. Over time their mobility transformed the face of Lima and of Peru itself. The Peruvian anthropologist José Matos Mar ([1984] 2004) has referred to this process as a desborde popular, or popular overflow; a transformative process through which Andean Peruvians could no longer be ignored as social and historical actors. The desborde popular importantly also changed the categories through which Peruvians of different class backgrounds make sense of self and Other.

While Andean Peruvians moved extensively within the national territory it was not until the late 1980s that international migration became a significant practice or even remote possibility for nonelite Andean Peruvians. Indeed, since colonial times overseas mobility had only been available to well-traveled Spanish and criollo (American-born Spaniard) elites, those who later came to call themselves “whites.” Central to these elites’ self-definition was cosmopolitanism in taste, consumption patterns, and educational experience, made possible by their relative wealth and access to political power, ID papers, and travel opportunities. Yet to
Figure I.1. Map of Peru. (Map by Brenda D. Allen)
become mobile within the transatlantic colonial societies, new-world criollo elites had to send “proofs of service” and “clean blood” to the Spanish king, hoping to take up administrative posts in Spain after having served their terms in the colonies (Abercrombie 1998; Pratt 1992). After independence in 1821, Peru’s self-styled and now “white” upper classes, who could no longer call themselves “Spaniards,” traveled for business and leisure and sent their children to study at exclusive universities in Europe and the United States.  

Beginning in the 1970s, countries in Latin America (along with Europe and the United States) went through yet another stage of profound social and economic change variously referred to as globalization, late capitalism, neoliberal globalization, or simply neoliberalism (Harvey 1989, 2007; Sassen 1998). Over the course of a few decades, the old political and economic elites increasingly lost their monopolistic hold over land, labor, national industries, businesses, and political life, ceding it to transnational corporations, foreign capital, neopopulist politicians, and an always-emergent class of entrepreneurs, many of Andean background (Tapia 1998). Many of the changes of that era were imposed through World Bank and International Monetary Fund “packages” that required Latin American countries seeking foreign debt repayment loans to demonstrate free-market policy performance (McClintock and Vallas 2003:109–10). Among them were free trade agreements and massive cuts in government spending to already meager social services, policing, and infrastructural funding, leading to an overall “shrinking of the state.” Furthermore, the end of import substitution industrialization (ISI) in Peru in 1987, and the opening of national markets to cheap commodities (generally from East Asia) also contributed to an immediate spike in poverty and unemployment (Gonzáles de Olarte 2007). These intertwined Washington Consensus policies asked Latin American countries to decentralize government, and aimed at propelling the growth of “civil society” and political participation at the grassroots level (McClintock and Vallas 2003; Tanaka 2002). In Peru, they coincided with the escalation of the PCP-SL (Sendero Luminoso) insurgency across the national
territory—not the sort of grassroots political action that Washington had sought.

Escape from the violence of the Sendero Luminoso insurgency/counterinsurgency and rural poverty were the main push factors that propelled rural-to-urban migration and urban middle-class transnational migration in the 1980s. Democratic instability and growing inequality as a result of Peru’s transition to a full-blown neoliberal economic regime in the 1990s produced unprecedented and upwardly spiraling emigration which continued through the first half of the decade of 2000 to 2010 not just from countryside to city, but away from Peru, of Peruvians of all regional backgrounds and social classes (Berg and Paerregaard 2005; Durand 2010; Massey and Capoferro 2006; Takenaka et al. 2010). According to numbers from the National Institute for Statistics and Information (INEI), 2,444,634 Peruvians left the country between 1990–2011 without coming back; this number represents 8.2 percent of the total population in 2011 (IOM 2012:81). Meanwhile, Andean rural communities were largely neglected by the state, left to resolve their own problems as they best could—often with the help of remittances from migrants abroad. Yet these communities simultaneously enjoyed several benefits from globalization; in particular the greatly enhanced global communication infrastructure which allowed people to communicate transnationally and access information previously unavailable to them. These articulations through new technology worked to broaden the horizon and aspirations of many and soon these Peruvians would impinge on what national elites historically had seen as their exclusive entitlement: the right to overseas travel and to the kind of cosmopolitan modernity and transnational subjectivity associated with it.

Yet, as I argue in this book, Andean Peruvians cannot freely access international destinations via state-authorized travel because of long-lived racial and class hierarchies in Peru that code their mobility negatively. While this prevailing social and racial order had already been partially destabilized by rural-to-urban migration and by the rise of the figure of the cholo as a political subject, it has been challenged anew in recent years with the migration of nonelite Andean Peruvians to foreign destinations. This book demonstrates how—when making claims to the transnational mobility embodied in overseas travel—nonelite Andean Peruvians produce friction and provoke elite policing of the boundar-
ies of what constitutes proper and legitimate “transnational mobility.” When traveling abroad and encountering other Peruvians in foreign cities, these migrants are largely regarded with suspicion in the context of cross-class social relations, thus reviving the “cultural conflict” of the cholo from an earlier era (Quijano 1980), but now projected onto a transnational scale. Further, when these provincial Peruvians return “Americanized” from abroad, like Jorge in the opening vignette, they are ridiculed by elites for their multiple and intertwined lacks and excesses and, perhaps most of all, for their wrongful belief that money alone can “whiten” them and give them access to elite social spaces and symbolic capital.

The research presented in this book depicts a moment in time when international migration from Peru was still spiraling upwards. I draw on ethnographic fieldwork in Peru and among Peruvian migrants in the United States conducted between 1998 and 2005, but most intensely during a period of eighteen months of dissertation fieldwork between March 1, 2004 and September 1, 2005. Two short research trips to Peru in the summer of 2011 and spring of 2013, and ongoing periodic visits to the U.S. locations of Paterson, New Jersey; Miami, Florida; and Washington, D.C., have allowed me to update my original long-term research and bring the life histories and migration histories up to date. Yet as the Peruvian economy in more recent years has continued to grow, the odds of migration, the motivations for leaving, and the dominant representations of mobility are shifting. After the global financial crisis of 2008, some Peruvians, including friends and informants from Paterson, Washington, D.C., and Miami, returned from abroad (IOM 2012), but in the bigger picture the number of return migrants is still insignificant relative to the number of Peruvians who continue to leave. I address these recent shifts and tendencies in the book’s conclusion, but for now I invite the reader to enter an ethnographic present in which staying in Peru had become tantamount with stagnation and lack of opportunities for survival, economic advancement, and self-improvement, in contrast to travel to foreign destinations—preferably outside Latin America—which has been imagined to be full of possibilities for realizing a promising and exciting future. But in order for this future to be actualized in real and tangible migration projects of outward and upward mobility, migrants had to continuously communicate to others who they were
and what they would like to become. Attention to these communicative practices is central to the approach to transnational migration, circulation, and mobility that I propose in this book.

Producing Mobility: Transnational Migration as Communicative Practice

For more than two decades, scholars interested in the increased circulation and flows of people, money, and goods emerging from a new global system of production and from increased travel opportunities and electronic mediation have documented and theorized how a variety of practices that span borders and straddle more than one nation-state have come to shape the consciousness, family forms, communities, and daily lives of people on the move around the world.

Much of the early globalization literature was quick to assert the decline of the nation-state, including its role in categorizing populations within this new social field characterized by global flows and deterritorialization of social, cultural, and political forms (Appadurai 1996). Anthropologists interested in international migration intervened in these broader debates by proposing what they called the transnational approach to migration (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1995). This approach studied “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (1995:48). This intervention spurred a vigorous debate about the kind, density, directionality, durability, and newness of migrants’ transnational ties. Initially based mostly on case studies of migration flows and circulation within sociocultural systems between Caribbean islands (e.g., Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Glick-Schiller et al. 1992), the transnational approach advanced important critiques of earlier U.S. immigration scholarship which had focused on immigration as a one-directional movement of cultural and racial outsiders coming in (i.e., “immigrants”) and on the ensuing processes of assimilation, acculturation, and integration that were supposed to make these newcomers into Americans. These latter studies had failed to account for migrants’ agency and for how the social contexts from which migrants’ actions also derived meaning might be located outside the United States, often in countries with dense histories of U.S. colonial, imperial, and
transnational entanglements that complicated assumptions of a unidirectional process of assimilation. The transnational approach quickly gained traction in migration studies, especially amongst anthropologists and sociologists, but some voiced concern with the approach’s a priori emphasis on the “national” in the “transnational” and the assumption that the national scale was the main frame of identification and reference for people on the move. Such an assumption, scholars argued, overlooked the complexity and meaning of migrants’ varied extralocal sociocultural relations, for example within dispersed global family networks (Olwig 2003), “migrant circuits” (Rouse 1991), “transnational communities” (Al-Ali and Koser 2002) or migrants’ varied social actions within the context of “transborder” or “translocal” lives (Stephen 2007). Roger Rouse (1995), for example, noted the methodological and epistemological problem of paying too much attention to struggles over collective identities without referencing the related processes by which people are made individual within the multiple constraints of the migration process. This book builds on Rouse’s still pertinent critique and uses the case of Andean migration and circulation to establish that there is nothing inherently homogeneous about national categories to begin with—whether “Peruvians,” “the Peruvian community abroad,” or “Peruvians in the United States”—because people inhabit such categories in radically dissimilar ways. Yet unlike scholars such as Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) who criticize the “methodological nationalism”—that is, the persistent assumption that the nation-state is the most central frame for empirical studies of international migration—in migration studies that focus on national origin groups and retain a claim on the centrality of the state (e.g., Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004), I side with governmentality scholars who focus not so much on the power of the nation-state per se as on the limits of its claims to coherence, impartiality, and legibility (Fassin 2011). In doing so, I offer an alternative strategy against methodological nationalism by focusing on the various stratifications that make national identification differentiated, partial, and incomplete in the first place. This is particularly relevant in a country like Peru with its long and persistent legacy of discrimination, racialization, and even criminalization of the mobility of the subaltern.

Over the course of this book, I show that migrants from the Mantaro Valley did not arrive at the U.S. border or port of entry or in U.S. towns
and cities with a ready-made “Peruvian identity” in their possession or a coherent “inner self” upon which a secondary “outer self” could be modeled. I demonstrate that the global economy and the migration process itself launch these migrants into complicated and continuous exercises of self and boundary making, through which they continuously attempt to act upon their predicament in order to transform it. These processes of self-definition, identification, boundary drawing, and subject making at play do, of course, not occur unilaterally or in a political vacuum. Numerous scholars from various theoretical orientations have argued that social boundaries and identifications are always coconstructed, relational; and always made against external and hegemonic definitions (Barth 1969; Battaglia 1995; Bourdieu 1989; Jenkins 1996; Nelson 1999), and shaped by historical processes and institutions, including colonialism, religion, the state, and the law (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:14–17). This book, then, offers an analysis of how migrants who act upon a world in movement and through movement construct themselves as social beings while they also simultaneously are being “produced” by larger structures, institutions, processes, and technologies.

My focus on mobility as social and communicative practice and embodied experience invites the analytical approach of practice theory and places this study in dialogue with central concerns in anthropology and social theory. Practice theory, particularly Bourdieu’s development of Marcel Mauss’s notion of habitus, has influenced generations of anthropologists since the 1960s (Ortner 1984). For Bourdieu, the concept of habitus links structure and action by making action a result of the embodiment of structure, which can also subsequently re-create structure (1990:53). Habitus is thus acquired through the activities and embodied experiences of everyday life in the form of values, dispositions, and sensibilities. It is important to highlight that social agents, according to Bourdieu, do not operate by making explicit calculations according to economic or other “rational” criteria—something that Bourdieu argued strongly against—but rather according to an implicit practical and bodily logic through which the individual can mobilize various strategies, albeit always within the generative capacities of his or her habitus and the social worlds he or she inhabits. Critics, however, have argued that Bourdieu’s framework is too rigid to account for the way in which people’s actions upon the world also has the potential to transform the
world through action. Social actors, many have noted, do not just mindlessly reproduce the world without becoming aware of its contradictions and of their own predicament (cf. Comaroff 1985). Ortner has famously argued for the need to add gender, history, and culture to practice theory to make it convincing to anthropologists and to truly turn one’s back on the functionalism of an earlier era (2006:16–18).

In this book, I combine a theory of social practice with one of signification through cultural and technological mediation to demonstrate how the transnational mobility of Peruvians is both a social and a signifying embodied practice that links the individual to the social collectivity. Jean Comaroff defines a “signifying practice” as “the process through which persons acting upon an external environment construct themselves as social beings” (1985:6). In contexts of migration, the migrant body is the center of these processes of signification; it is that which is read by others—for example, migration officers, Anglo Americans, and nonmigrant relatives—and that which in the most fundamental sense mediates all action upon the world and simultaneously constitutes new subjectivities within wider webs of social relations, structures, and institutions. Drawing upon this definition and upon recent insights about the technological mediation of social relationships in a broad sense, I demonstrate that migrants over the course of the migration process engage in a variety of communicative practices—from using and embodying phony documents to calling their children from abroad and from performing “Peruvianness” in U.S. public spaces to circulating videos within their own transnational kin and family networks—to constitute the self in movement and produce the world of social relations within which they operate. For example, I show how visual and oral forms of communication not only extend but also complicate and in their own way expose the inherent tensions and ambiguities of the migrant/transnational condition of Andean Peruvians.

Broadly understood, then, these communicative practices that use visual, rhetorical, and material resources and cues are central to the way Andean Peruvians over the course of migration—whether temporary or permanent, internal and transnational—become increasingly conscious of their own social positioning within a larger social and racial order and within the multiple social relationships they maintain and create across borders. I show that the larger constraints of the migration process con-
stantly prompt migrants to communicate to others—elite Peruvians, people in migrants’ home towns and urban neighborhoods in Peru, U.S. immigration officials, employers, and wider publics—an image of what one is and who one wishes or is expected to be. Such images are necessarily partial; indeed, they deny any facile claims to legibility embedded in normative and ideal-typical representations of who “Peruvians” or “Peruvian migrants” are, yet as mediations that operate across multiple contexts and scales they are centrally shaping how Andean Peruvians construct, experience, and embody their mobility. They are also key to the way migrants reenvision their communities and themselves in a contemporary global and interconnected world.

The challenge for many anthropologists who study transnational and global migration is how to maintain a sense of fluidity and process from the ground up while also acknowledging the heightened role of nation-states and other regimes of power that categorize populations by imposing new forms of governance and control and in turn shape the production and experience of mobility. Using a transnational and multisited approach, this volume explicitly addresses this challenge as it exposes the productive tension between the lives of Andean migrants who through the circulation of images, objects, and embodied performances produce their own mobility, creating partial representations of who they are and wish to become, with accounts of the relevant structures, institutions, and technologies that shape and constrain their efforts. The applicability of the conclusions drawn from this study go beyond the Peruvian and Latin American context and offer a new analytic frame for considering the exasperated relationships between race, mobility, and global formations today. The book’s broader question about how personhood gets distributed, questioned, and challenged in contexts of migration exposes how in contemporary societies goods and money may flow relatively unhindered across international borders, but the mobility of men and women of various backgrounds continues to be constrained and coded in ways that have profound consequences in migrants’ everyday lives.
The Transgressiveness of Andean Mobility

Peru presents a particularly interesting case for the study of migrant personhood because of the ways in which larger colonial and imperial projects for centuries have informed judgments about Peruvians and their mobile practices. Despite the fact that cities in Latin America have never existed without Indian labor, the “out-of-placeness” of Indians in the urban environment has since the colonial period simultaneously produced the mobility of the Andean indigenous subject and the cultural hybridity emerging from it as fundamentally transgressive. This transgression is embodied in the figure of the cholo itself. Since the early days of the colonial period, indigenous and mestizo migrants settled in Spanish towns and cities where they were registered as indios criollos (creole Indians, i.e., cholos) working in urban trades (Graubart 2009) or as yanaconas (“helpers” or “dependants”) who became essential to the social reproduction of white Spaniard and criollo households. However, their presence in urban public spaces was undeniably met with suspicion because they embodied what Abercrombie calls a “pernicious form of debased Indianhood” (1991:114). Historians have reported that colonial authorities complained when Indians adopted Spanish and mestizo clothing and hairstyles, attitudes, language, and lifestyle because it made them problematically indistinguishable from their Spanish and mestizo associates (Spalding 1970:647). Such complaints were informed by a broader and predominant view in the colonial society of cities as the natural habitat of the cosmopolitan and world-knowing urban elites, whereas Indians belonged in the mountains unless hidden as invisibilized labor in the kitchens or bedrooms of elite households.

Lack of literacy, formal education, and knowledge of urban lifestyles was understood first by Spaniards and later whitened criollo elites, as well as by indigenista intellectuals and republican nationalists, as preventing the rural person in the city labeled cholo from successfully acquiring their kind of urban skills and behaving like whitened, privileged city dwellers. The word cholo is said to emerge in this colonial context, according to historian Magnus Mörner, as “an expression of the suspicion that an individual claiming mestizo status was merely an Indian trying to escape his oppressed condition” (Mörner 1985:63). In fact, the Quechua noble Guaman Poma de Ayala already described the figure...
Introduction

The politics of colonial subjugation and its criteria of difference changed the economy of identification within Latin America’s new nation-states after independence in 1821. With the emergence of nineteenth-century racial theory, the hierarchy reigning in the urban spheres of the Andean republics was simplified into blancos (whites), mestizos (mixed race), and cholas (i.e., the urban Indian). Abercrombie (1996:95, 96) has shown that the categories of “criollo” and “españoles criollos” ceased to make sense as categories of self-identification in the new Andean republics. He argues that it was now the claim to a superior “whiteness,” backed by “scientific” theories of race, which became the postcolonial elites’ access point to disproportionate wealth and the power to disenfranchise others on the basis of race.

Modern race making in Peru paralleled a political process of place-making within the new nation-state following evolutionary logics and distributions of power across the national territory. Several scholars have demonstrated that the racialization of geography gave rise to a pervasive image of the existence of “two Perus”: one coastal and white/mestizo, which ranked higher in the social order, and the other, Andean and indigenous, which ranked lower (Cueto 1989; De la Cadena 2000:21; Méndez 2011; Orlove 1993, 1998; Poole 1997). This image of the two Perus was widely circulated by Peru’s intellectual elites. De la Cadena writes about how José de la Riva Agüero, one of Peru’s best known thinkers and one of the few Limeño intellectuals to venture to the highlands in the 1910s, depicted this social, racial, and geographical divide in his travel writings: “The coast has represented innovation, swiftness, joy, and pleasure; the highlands, have symbolized an almost backward conservatism, a seriousness that approaches sadness, a discipline that approximates civility and an endurance leading virtually to torpidness” (Riva Agüero 1995:225, quoted in De la Cadena 2000:21). The spatialization of race across the national territory—along with the attribution of particular forms of racialized affect to inhabitants of the “two Perus”—has provided continued legitimacy to Peru’s highly stratified class structure and social and racial order and persistently justified the control, exploitation, and differential classification of members of the cholo in El Primer Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno, a 1,200-page chronicle written between 1600 and 1615 for King Philip III of Spain.
society into ranks of racial, social, and moral superiority (De la Cadena 2000; Poole 1997; Quijano 2007).\textsuperscript{13}

The spatialization of race across the national territory had clear implications for the negative moral coding of the mobility of the Andean Indian within Peru. When Andean peasants migrated to cities and adopted urban lifestyles they were seen as invading urban space and encroaching on the privileges of urban elites. “Indians in cities” and along with them the urban figure of the “cholo” became the key threat to urban elites because of their in betweenness in political, economic, and cultural terms.\textsuperscript{14} In order to prevent the invasion of the city produced by “Indian mobility” and preclude the further incursion of the cholo into the social and political domains of the urban lettered elites, rural-urban migration had to be curbed, disciplined, regulated, and contained. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw numerous public policy initiatives, many phrased in the language of health, hygiene, and public order, aimed at keeping indigenous migrants out of Peru’s cities and preventing them from participating as citizens in urban political and social life. In the provinces, the newly fashioned postcolonial and provincial elites, as shown by Fiona Wilson (2004) in the case of Tarma, also attempted to separate the modernizing towns from their prior colonial embeddedness in indigenous customs, by drawing new racial distinctions and social boundaries to effectively reorder urban society and redefine citizenship around constricting notions of whiteness. This included attempts to deny the indigenous guilds the right to process and dance in the center of town and regulate the burial practices of the town’s Indians (Wilson 2004:173–76). In Lima, these exclusionary policies continued into the twentieth century and included everything from bans on the construction of affordable housing in the 1930s, making it more difficult for migrant families to settle in the capital, to proposed legislation that directly sought to prohibit people from the provinces from entering the capital and by requiring them to carry an internal passport (De Soto 1986). Progressive social reformers in the early twentieth century were also contemplating how to resolve Peru’s “Indian problem” (i.e., how to integrate the indigenous rural population in the national community.) Some advocated for the transformative power of industrialization, as shown by Paulo Drinot (2011), and hoped that industrialization could
transform Peru’s backward indigenous population into de-Indianized
and civilized modern workers. Others highlighted education as central
to the modernizing state’s project of making Indians into de-Indianized
modern subjects (cf. De la Cadena 2000).

But whereas the Indian at the turn of the century across the Andean
republics was perceived by political elites as being potential material for
improvement and civilization who could be redeemed through educa-
tion, the real villains of Andean modernity, as Brooke Larson (2005:232)
has convincingly argued, remained the provincial mestizo, who was re-
garded by urban elites as an economic parasite and a political despot,
and the urban cholo who was viewed as semi-acculturated, politically
volatile, vice-ridden, and socially and sexually transgressive. These long-
standing social and racial stereotypes which had a significant impact on
the way migrants from the central highlands were perceived when they
began arriving in Lima in the early to mid-twentieth century, were re-
vived when Andean Peruvians started to migrate abroad in larger num-
bers at the end of the twentieth century.

As Peru continues to change, Peruvians of Andean background are
carving out important social, economic, and political spaces within
and beyond Peruvian society. Some white Limeños now jokingly yet
ambiguously proclaim: “We’re all chulos now.” While such claims are
mostly parasitical on the success of the much-touted entrepreneurial
cholo as a new neoliberal subject and less a validation of the legacy of
rural-to-urban migrants and their new Limeño children (Portocarrero
1993), they do indicate that something is in flux in the Peruvian social
order. The entrance of racialized working-class Peruvians into global
migration streams in larger numbers has also contributed to fostering
an aspirational class mobility among Andean Peruvians who associate
their image of “middle-classness” with material capital, global mobil-
ity, and a vernacular kind of cosmopolitan lifestyle that combines local
cultural forms and social mores with global patterns of mobility. One
of the best places to observe these dynamics ethnographically is in the
Mantaro Valley whose inhabitants for centuries have been systemati-
cally drawn into colonial, regional, and global labor markets and whose
contemporary inhabitants in many ways are the “living embodiments”
of centuries-long contradictory processes of articulation through mobi-
ity and circulation.
Between the Two Perus: The Mantaro Valley of the Central Highlands

The Mantaro Valley in the central highlands of Peru where I conducted most of my fieldwork occupies a particular in-between space in Peru’s social and racial geography, which in many ways challenges the typical binary pairs (e.g. coastal/Andean, mestizo/Indian, rural/urban) that historically have characterized the pervasive construction of the “two Perus.” Since very early on in the colonial period the Mantaro Valley has been tied into global processes of circulation and exchange, which produced a particular history of mestizaje, or racial mixing, that scholars have interpreted as unique to the area (Arguedas 1953, 1975; Romero 2001, 2004). This history, along with the irreversible wave of “modernization” that hit the valley in the early twentieth century, has fundamentally shaped the views on mobility in this area and created particular conditions for the production of mobile subjectivities. This regional variability is important to consider when discussing what is specific about Andean transnational migration vis-à-vis other transnational migration flows and processes. In contrast to theories of transnationalism that posit similar conditions shaping migrant exchanges regardless of local cultural context and specific historical and materialist contexts, I propose that the particular history of exchange and circulation in which the Mantaro region is articulated continues to shape people’s outlook on transnational migration and mobility today.

The Mantaro Valley is located in the Department of Junin, east of the Central Cordillera of the Andes, and is split in two by the Mantaro River, which runs northwest–southeast between the cities of Jauja and Huancayo—the former, once the first capital of Peru and now a quiet provincial town, and the latter the largest and most important city in the area with a bustling commercial center, several universities, and a total population of 357,279 (INEI 2013). The city of Huancayo has grown exponentially since the 1980s with the arrival of internal migrants displaced by the violent conflict from their communities in the nearby departments of Huancavelica and Ayacucho and also from the more distant departments of Huánuco and Apurimac (Tamagno 1998). Huancayo is also the center of gravity for the inhabitants of the valley’s sixty-four rural districts on the plains surrounding the river and in the
Figure I.2. Map of the Central Highlands. (Map by Brenda D. Allen)
highlands surrounding the actual valley who often frequent the city’s markets, schools, and government offices.

The intense circulation of people, goods, and cultural forms and an accelerated process of mestizaje have shaped this area of the Peruvian highlands over many centuries and made it a unique region within Peru which, in a way that is atypical compared to the other regions in the country, combines strong integration into the global economy with a dedicated effort at cultural distinction from the national society. The Peruvian novelist, poet, and anthropologist José Maria Arguedas always highlighted the Mantaro Valley in his essays for its high degree of economic and cultural independence with regard to the dominant culture of national elites. When Arguedas arrived in Huancayo in 1928, he described the city as a typical mestizo town but where any Indian could be integrated “because the city offers prospects for all, without requiring anyone to surrender their gods for admission to its premises” (Arguedas 1975:139).

Yet in the Peruvian Andes, as elsewhere in Latin America (cf. Nelson 1999), it is impossible to distinguish between “Indians” and “mestizos” in any meaningful way because of the very nature of the colonial process itself. In an attempt to undo the common view of a presumptive unidirectional historical process which made the Indians into mestizos, Marisol de la Cadena (2005) has masterfully argued that the term mestizo itself is “doubly hybrid.” Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century racial taxonomies, she argues, defined “mestizos” as nonindigenous individuals as the result of biological or cultural mixture and in this sense made the mestizo “empirically hybrid.” But she also shows that the mestizo category since early on in the colonial period denoted transgression of the rule of faith and its statuses of purity, which produced a different kind of hybridity, one in which indigeneity could be retained. This historical complexity makes the mestizo a “doubly” hybrid category—one which, according to De la Cadena, reveals several subordinate options for mestizo subject positions, including various forms of indigeneity (2005:263–264). Romero (2004:33) has argued that rather than binary racial categories of Indians and whites, it was economic stratification coupled with the area’s particular history of mestizaje that became the most important criteria for social distinction in the twentieth century. This point is corroborated by the anthropological scholarship on the
many festivals, musical traditions, dances, and indigenous rituals in the area that show that the mestizos of the valley have continued to practice and deliberately cultivate a strong regional cultural identity—in Huan-
cayo, frequently glossed as “la identidad wanka”—which in turn has bol-
stered the area’s strong sense of Andean cultural autonomy vis-à-vis the
national criollo society (Arguedas 1953; Romero 2001; Vilcapoma 1995).
This “reinvented” and inherently modern cultural identity, as also noted
by Romero (2004:44–47), is a source of pride for many inhabitants in
the valley and, indeed, I saw many of these cultural practices and reli-
gious symbols mobilized by Mantaro Valley migrants abroad. Yet I am
here less concerned with the reproduction of any preexisting identity or
cultural form as with the ongoing processes through which mobility is
embodyed, experienced, and imbued with meaning by Mantaro Valley
residents.

Residents of the Mantaro Valley have been migrating since the turn
of the twentieth century. Wealthier peasants typically migrated to Lima
and cultivated strong social and economic networks in the capital, some
settling in the capital on a more permanent basis. Peasants from less
well-off families went to the nearby mining areas or to the coast, but
their migration was seldom a unidirectional movement toward perma-
nent and irreversible settlement on the coast. Many retained their family
homes and small land holdings in the area. Scholars have contended
that such patterns of mobility allowed the peasants in this area to resist
proletarization as miners. Instead they used their migration earnings to
fuel the local fiesta circuit and economy (Bonilla 1974; Long and Roberts
1978; Mallon 1983; Romero 2001). This tendency is repeated in contem-
porary transnational migration; however, here the duration of migra-
tion trips is much longer and return to the home community is seldom
permanent.

The escalating political violence and the restructuring of the Peru-
vian economy in the 1980s and 1990s prompted not just Mantaro Valley
residents to migrate abroad; indeed, many nonelite Andean Peruvians
who were not part of the small segment of Peruvian society standing
to benefit from neoliberal economic reforms and the state’s repressive
counterinsurgency strategy increasingly opted to extend their livelihood
beyond Peru’s borders. From the 1990s and onward, transnational mi-
gration became a key strategy for people from the Mantaro Valley to cir-
cumvent the barriers against social and class mobility in Peru and to act upon their desire for transnational mobility and modernity still largely denied to them within Peru today. Many chose the United States as their most desired destination. It is with this history of striving for outward and upward mobility—and the emergence of new Andean subjectivities within it—that I am primarily concerned here.

Despite Mantaro Valley residents’ self-image as modern, industrious, and culturally autonomous within Peru, when migrating to the United States they are instantly perceived through the images and dominant prototypes through which the majority of Latinos are typically racialized in the United States. How working-class and indigenous Latin American migrants are perceived and racialized under U.S. nativism as part of the larger anti-immigration and anti-Latino narrative—what Leo Chávez has called “the Latino Threat” (2008)—is in many ways homologous to the way indigenous and mestizo migrants of rural origins historically have been perceived in Latin American urban life and still are today, as much for the identities they have not fully realized as for those they have failed to leave behind. Thus, along with the migration of actual bodies, this book also examines the transnational circulation of such dominant tropes of urban life and their complicity in shaping the way migrants both embody mobility and negotiate race, class, and gendered subjectivities in national and transnational contexts.

Peruvian Migrants in the U.S. Racial Economy

Peruvians and other South American migrants have until recently received little attention in the scholarship on migration to the United States and in studies of U.S. Latinos. Oboler (2005a) has suggested that their numerical and political presence has not been deemed significant enough to merit more serious scholarly attention in comparison to other geopolitically more “important” migrant groups such as Cubans, Mexicans, and Central Americans of various national origins who have been widely studied in the literature on U.S.-bound migration (cf. Boehm 2012; Coutin 2007; Dreby 2010; García 2006; Massey et al. 2003; R. C. Smith 2005; Stephen 2007). Moreover, as Oboler also notes (2005a), since South Americans until the 1990s were largely either elite or middle-class skilled professionals and, in Elsa Chaney’s words, “aliens
by choice” (1976), they had largely remained under the radar in U.S. academic discussions about Latinos, Latinismo, and Latinidad, either because they had inserted themselves as “honorary whites” into mainstream U.S. society, facilitated by their education and class status, or because they experienced their own migration as a temporary period in a longer life trajectory, which would end with a return to the homeland (cf. Pellegrino 2003). This return may or may not have happened, but the idea of it shaped these earlier migrants’ politics of identification in the United States.  

According to official 2010 U.S. census data, there are 556,000 Hispanics of Peruvian origin residing in the United States, making Peruvians the 11th largest Hispanic group in the country accounting for 1.1% of the Hispanic population (the Hispanic population overall in the U.S. is 51.9 million, or 16.5% of the total U.S. population) (Pew Hispanic Center 2013). In comparison, the Peruvian government and the International Organization of Migration (IOM) estimated in 2010 that 939,855 Peruvians were living in the United States that year and that roughly 50% of them were likely to have irregular migratory statuses (INEI, DIGEMIN, and IOM 2010). The majority of Peruvians in the U.S. is foreign-born (ca. two-thirds) and arrived in the U.S. in 1990 or later. Indeed, in recent years, Peru, with Colombia and Ecuador, has become one of the three major migrant-sending nations from South America to the United States (Tienda and Sánchez 2013).

This changing demographic landscape has also shifted the politics of identification among Peruvians abroad as more and more working-class and indigenous Peruvians are now migrating to the United States, and to a greater extent than prior cohorts of migrants are being subjected to racialization as Latinos in the United States. Omi and Winant (1994) first proposed the concept of racialization to grasp the way that racial identity gets assigned and assumed by people in the context of everyday experience, especially in societies like the United States where race in very fundamental ways structures both the state and everyday life in communities. Adding to this discussion, sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (1997) notes that although the perspective of Omi and Winant represented a major breakthrough in theorizing about race, it does not sufficiently regard race as “social collectivities.” Bonilla-Silva proposes
in turn the more general concept of “racialized social systems,” which he uses to refer to societies in which “economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races” (Bonilla-Silva 1997:469). Following Bonilla, when migrants arrive in the United States they are placed in such racial categories, which in turn have consequences for how they fare in the country. Race is of course not the only structural factor that conditions migrants’ possibilities of reinventing themselves in new settings and other scholars have shown that gender, class, sexuality, and illegality are equally important to consider when looking at the factors that constrain Latin American migrant experiences (Abrego 2014; Boehm 2012; Decena 2011; Vasquez del Aguila 2013). Although recognizing that race is produced at the intersection of other systems of power, we cannot disregard its fundamental importance given that so many migrants in the United States today live as racialized and undocumented workers whose self-definition strategies are limited in multiple ways by labor exploitation, discrimination, institutionalized racism, and contradictory immigration policies (De Genova 2005; Ramos-Zayas 2012; Durand and Massey 2003; Chávez 2008).

This book also demonstrates that the migration process itself complicates racialization processes as migrants move between and are located within several national and racial projects. The entrance of working-class and indigenous Latin Americans into a global labor market has produced a new and aspirational cosmopolitanism and a homogenization of the image of “middle class” among these populations, associated with material capital (cf. Werbner 2008). Within this larger global context, racialization necessarily gets redefined, and this requires a more dynamic structural perspective on race because mobility is constitutive of how individuals assume race and how they are accommodated—socially and racially—as they cross boundaries and social worlds. Racialization processes that are seen as generated solely from one “national context” are therefore inadequate because migrants’ actions—the way they imagine themselves and others—often derive meaning from multiple social and historical contexts, some of which are located outside the United States, in the home country. Indeed, the discussions presented in this book highlight the fact that the intersection between racial formations
in Peru and the subject positions that are produced through migration and transnational practices prompt racialized Peruvians in the United States to “become Peruvian” in ways that they could not have been prior to migration because of entrenched racism and enduring class bias.

Peruvian migration to the United States was first studied anthropologically by Teófilo Altamirano (1988, 1990), who in two volumes described the social, cultural, and psychological dynamics of Peruvian migrants to the country via the communities and migrant organizations they formed there in the 1980s. More recently, Paerregaard (2008) has tracked the global dispersion of Peruvians, including to the United States, where he examines the tensions between migrants’ transnational links and the structures of opportunity they encounter in their destination countries. Studies based on larger scale demographic survey data studies, such as Princeton University’s Latin American Migration Project (LAMP), have offered demographic profiles highlighting different aspects of the changing nature of Peruvian emigration (Durand 2010; Massey and Capoferro 2006; Takenaka and Pren 2010). Jorge Durand, for example, has concluded that Peruvian migration is composed of older and better educated individuals than is typical of comparable international migrations, that it tends to involve a wider variety of destinations, and that it has evolved into a multiclass phenomenon over the past decades as a result of Peru’s overlapping economic and political crisis of the 1980s (2010:25–26). Durand also suggests that the highly urban composition reported in the available studies reflects that most of them are based on surveys and fieldwork in Lima and that these findings are still to be corroborated by studies from other regions of Peru.

This book offers an ethnographic study of a migrant-sending region in the central highlands and also draws on research with migrants who left that area between the late 1980s and around 2005 to seek work and opportunities in the United States. While migrants from the central highlands can be found in many communities across the United States, this volume draws on research with migrants from the Mantaro Valley in Paterson, New Jersey, Miami, Florida, and the Washington, D.C./Maryland area. These sites were originally chosen as U.S. field sites because they reflect the different moments and conditions of departure as well as the way in which Peru’s class structure is reproduced, distributed, and mapped onto particular U.S. urban and suburban spaces.
Peruvians started to arrive in Paterson in the 1950s and 1960s, when a moderate number of migrants from Lima's working-class neighborhoods came to New Jersey to work in the textile industry (Altamirano 1990). Like most Americans at the time, Peruvians who arrived at Paterson in the early 1960s believed that the United States was standing at the dawn of a golden age. Work was still plentiful in Paterson's factories and by mid-decade the immigration reforms of 1965 further favored Latin American migration. Postwar-era deindustrialization and rising unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s gave rise to common urban problems like poverty, crime, racial tension, and white flight and the earlier generations of immigrants (mostly white ethnics, but also some Peruvians) started leaving the city and moving to the surrounding suburbs and more affluent towns. Peruvians in New Jersey today live in many different towns, although the largest number continue to live in Paterson. Miami also became a preferred destination for Peruvian exile elites who fled the left-wing military dictatorship of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968–75) and his successor Francisco Morales Bermúdez (1975–1980); they settled in the affluent areas of Key Biscayne and Coral Gables, among other places.

These early migration streams of both elite and working-class urban migrants were later followed by large numbers of middle-class Peruvians, also urban, who fled the economic crisis and political violence in Peru of the 1980s and 1990s. Sarah Mahler, for example, has noted that the South Americans she encountered on Long Island in the late 1980s (many of them Peruvians) were better off economically, more educated, and overwhelmingly urban when compared to the Central Americans in her study (1995:23). When observing a Spanish-language mass at a Catholic church, Mahler noted that, in contrast to the Central Americans, the South Americans would enter and sit at the front of the sanctuary; they were “conspicuous” and “dressed for success” (Mahler 1995:15,17). Yet many middle-class Peruvians experienced downward mobility upon their arrival. Elena Sabogal (2005) has shown that Peruvian middle-class professionals who migrated to Miami in the 1990s, many without legal status, language skills, or employment sponsorship, experienced a great deal of anxiety and worked hard to reconcile their downward social mobility with their professional backgrounds and personal aspirations.
Lower-class and indigenous migration from the Mantaro Valley and other parts of the central and southern highlands of Peru to Washington, D.C., and its environs took place starting in the late 1960s and 1970s and unfolded in two phases. The first was facilitated by changes in U.S. immigration law after 1965, when women from the central and southern highlands of Peru—all with prior migration experience as empleadas domésticas, or domestic workers, in Lima—came to Maryland and the District of Columbia to work as housekeepers and child care providers in the homes of Washington, D.C.’s diplomatic and professional families (Gelles 2005). When the political violence in Peru escalated toward the end of the 1980s, the second phase of migration took place, comprised of male relatives (sons, husbands, and siblings) traveling with help from their female precursors. Many of these male relatives did not qualify for family reunification, as their female relatives had often overstayed their employment visas and had also not met the cut-off date for the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), the last amnesty to see the light of day in recent U.S. immigration history. Instead they traveled via unauthorized routes, often assisted by migration professionals. But in contrast to Mexican and Central American labor migrants, Peruvians cannot simply pay a coyote or human smuggler to walk or drive them across an adjacent border at a relatively moderate (though rising) cost (Spener 2009). Instead, they must pay astronomical amounts to access the “services” of increasingly expensive and specialized migration professionals in Lima to reach their faraway destinations by a combination of air and overland routes. Those who successfully “pass” the heightened scrutiny of background checks and immigration checkpoints are still likely to end up without permanent legal status in low-paid entry-level service-sector jobs at the bottom of the U.S. labor market.

While this book relies partly on fieldwork among Peruvian migrants I encountered in these U.S. cities and suburbs, who happen to embody multiple and heterogeneous experiences, it is not a conventional immigration study about “Peruvians in the United States” from the perspective of the receiving society. Rather, the story it tells is about transnational circulation and the notions of person and self operating in the social and temporal space that spans the Peruvian highlands, Lima, various U.S. cities and suburbs, and the transit spaces that migrants inhabit in between. The experiences abroad of Andean Peruvians who migrated to
the United States in the 1990s and 2000s constitute an important aspect of this book, but it is only one aspect of the story of circulation I wish to tell. Equally important is the unsettling friction produced by Andean migrants’ presence and practices when they return to Peru as “Americanized cholos” displaying a particular kind of transnational and cosmopolitan sensibility, or when intervening in local and national affairs from abroad. By returning the analytical gaze to Peru at the end of the book, I want to remind the reader of the perseverance of the ethnic, racial, class, and gender hierarchies that condition nonelite Andean migrants’ access to transnational mobility in the first place, but also of the transformative power of migrant practices which refract and make untenable the forms of personhood historically accorded to Andean migrants within Peru’s traditional race and class hierarchies.

Ambulant Ethnography

This project was originally inspired by George Marcus’s conceptualizations of multisited ethnography (1995) and is profoundly influenced by his invitation to methodological innovation for fieldwork in global and transnational settings. Yet the project’s multisitedness did not emerge as an attempt at methodological virtue per se; rather, it was the empirical realities of the subjects’ lives that motivated the choice of various ethnographic sites and made the project “multisited.”

The scope of this project and its geographical dispersion involved me being constantly on the move and in a transient state, whether on board one of the Peruvian-owned combis shuttling between New York’s Penn Station and downtown Paterson, or descending from the Andes on the night bus from Huancayo to Lima accompanying informants on their way to fix paperwork for an upcoming trip (tramitar papeles), pick up remittances or encomiendas from a migrant relative, do business errands, or visit family. I call this fieldwork modality “ambulant ethnography.” I use the term ambulant here not just to indicate a mode of fieldwork based on tracking the movement of people and objects through space, which is what Marcus suggested when he proposed to “follow the people” (1995:106), but also in specific reference to the Spanish noun ambulante (from the Latin ambulare, i.e., “walking”), which in Peru means a street vendor, often a migrant woman of Andean origins who peddles
goods on the streets or at the market. The *ambulante* is the epitome of a mobile, malleable, boundary transgressing, and highly agentive character who must adapt to the rhythm of urban life, to traveling far, and to the ever-present possibility of uncertain payoff. So too is the work of the ambulant ethnographer, whose sensibilities are oriented toward situating agency in the multiple spatial and temporal contexts in which people move, dwell, or fashion themselves; while not all these contexts involve the crossing of national borders, they are all firmly situated in the larger framework of political and racial economies and regimes of mobility.²⁶

Ambulant ethnography is grounded in an anthropological perspective on migration and mobility that sees migration as social practice and as a profoundly generative process for other social forms and categories, including self and personhood. I use the term mobility to indicate that migration as experience and embodied social practice is centrally imbued with meaning and power. Here, I build on the work of Tim Cresswell (2006), who surveys how mobility in the Western world is historically variable and grounded in particular contexts and calls upon scholars to be aware of how mobility may be shaped by either “sedentarist” or “nomadic” metaphysics that code mobility—and by extension mobile subjects—in particular ways (2006:38). Yet I also side with scholars who critique the facile and celebratory view of “new mobilities studies,” including the assumed newness frequently ascribed to such mobilities. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013), for example, indicate that current conceptions that conflate and normalize various forms of movement into one single category (see, for example, Urry 2007) are inadequate for understanding the particular complexities of human migration and the regimes of mobility that shape them. Others have argued that despite the heightened currency of “mobility,” “movement,” and “flow” which have become ever more popular in academic discourse and relevant in the world at large to describe the conditions of life under late capitalism, such “mobilities” and “flows” should not be taken as an indication, as this study also confirms, that the ontological status of places and of belonging in people’s experience of their own mobility is in any way diminishing (Rockefeller 2010, 2011).

Ambulant ethnography thus seeks to provide ethnographic descriptions of the social, performative, and communicative practice that positions and connects migrants and their nonmigrating family members
in relation to specific places, nationalist projects, border crossings, and within larger political and racial economies. In doing so, this mode of fieldwork considers how the meanings, experiences, and imaginaries of transnational migration and mobility are deeply intertwined with long-standing forms of immobility (Salazar and Smart 2011), based on racial and class hierarchies. Focusing on my interlocutors’ own perceptions of who they are or would like to be and how they seek to belong in a world of movement and stasis has allowed me to understand their migration trajectories as part of a larger aspirational project that spans extensive time-spaces and generates new forms of subjectivity, but which is never inseparable from the persistent image of the rural indio or the urban cholo as quintessential anticosmopolitan subjects. I am not trying to claim that my ethnographic interlocutors understood their own self-fashioning strategies in the same way I did or even that they used the same terms to describe their actions and identifications. People often tell stories about themselves that may not be congruent with the also partial story that the anthropologist attempts to tell and so it is our role—indeed the staple of our discipline—to situate these narratives through the complex exercise of ethnographic contextualization.

A project of this nature required a polyfocal research strategy. I used a combination of methods including participant observation, ethnographic interviews, life histories, narrative analysis, social network analysis, photo and video elicitation, analysis of media objects and texts, and field notes constructed from memory to address the various and contradictory processes of articulation of which the inhabitants of the Mantaro Valley are “living embodiments” (Comaroff 1985:2). This included generating material about the experience and meaning of transnational migration and its links to ideas and histories of mobility in highland Peru; the role of various structures, institutions, and technologies in the migration process which shape migrant agency and link it to wider social, racial, and politicoeconomic contexts and regimes of mobility; and finally, the moral economy of transnational socialities including migrants’ and nonmigrating family and community members’ perceptions and management of long-distance social relations. Whenever possible I collected exemplary media objects and texts exchanged between migrants abroad and family members in Peru. These included photographs, videos, some older audiocassettes, letters, and some email
correspondence. Analyzing these materials, along with listening in and
taking notes on “presentations of self” (Goffman [1955] 2005, 1959; Bau-
man and Briggs 1990) through phone conversations, web chats, face-
to-face visits, gift exchanges, and other mediated practices, allowed me
to understand how participants in all sites strove to extend themselves
through objects, technologies, and embodied skills to signal who they
are as members of transnational families and communities and how they
belong.

Needless to say, the challenging task of holding in juxtaposition the
numerous sites so that a coherent overall argument could emerge, at
times required acrobatic exercises of ethnographic contextualization, in
addition to the intense multitasking needed over the course of the field-
work period. The methodological challenges I faced are similar to those
described by other anthropologists working with migrants in transna-
tional settings (Coutin 2007; Zilberg 2011) or in what Karen Fog Olwig
(2003) has termed “extended fieldsites.” Indeed, the fantasy of fieldwork
as a total immersion in a relatively bounded collectivity or in social rela-
tionships which are circumscribed to one locality is no longer feasible to
entertain when researching transnationally mobile subjects whose lives
are articulated and become meaningful within territorially dispersed
and often highly fragmented social networks and through ephemeral
and mediated forms of social and cultural belonging.

The question of how we are to immerse ourselves in social relations
that are not contained within one or just a few localities, and are also
often experienced either through their absence or through various
forms of technological mediation, is less straightforward. The real chal-
genle with multisited fieldwork is that due to the practical challenges of
managing multiple sites we often have less time and fewer opportuni-
ties to “get to know” people, access their existential fields of experience,
and understand their social dynamics in each site and through different
media. Hence our ability to observe how people are constructing them-
selves in relation to others and the connections between their various
narratives and the spaces they inhabit is somewhat limited (cf. Miller
and Slater 2000). I am not claiming here that anthropologists at any
point have been able to access the total fields of experiences of our in-
formants, but rather that this task has become more complex as research
sites become more dispersed and global forces harder to pin down eth-
nographically in terms of their concrete material and affective manifestations (although see Mintz 1998, who contends that the notion that transnationalism is a qualitatively different global phenomenon with implications for fieldwork is exaggerated). Consequently, anthropologists today who work with dispersed populations must rely methodologically a great deal more on the “media trails” from a variety of social media platforms that research subjects produce about their social lives and relations. These can yield important information about the strategies of self-fashioning that they employ.

The Anthropologist on the Move

A transnationally mobile, educated, and light-skinned European woman, I entered this fieldwork project from a very different vantage point and social positioning than the majority of my Peruvian interlocutors, and my own migration history, subjectivity, fieldwork trajectory, and multiple place attachments have shaped in important ways both my research practice and the conclusions I have reached. My Danish nationality and my claims to a privileged transnational mobility and cosmopolitan subjectivity were rarely questioned by the institutions and social groups monitoring it—in Peru, the United States, and the transit spaces in between—and my interlocutors in the central highlands of Peru perceived me at best with some ambiguity partly (from what I could judge) as a result of our vastly different class, racial, gendered, and institutional positionalities and the normative projects that shape them.

When I did my first fieldwork in the central highlands in the late 1990s, I was enrolled as an exchange student at La Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, then one of Lima’s most expensive and exclusive universities. La Católica is widely known across the country and any association with it almost immediately evokes the symbolic, social, and financial capital that characterize national elites in Peru. Yet my informants in the Mantaro Valley quickly noticed, as did my peers at the University in Lima, that I lacked coherence in my social and cultural comportment that would let me fit into the social categories that they each had available for me. My affiliation with marginal urban art scenes in Lima and my temporary residence in a boyfriend’s family home in Matute (a low-income neighborhood in the district of La Victoria) left
my academic and university acquaintances perplexed, at best a little amused, and some had the urge to reprimand and discipline me. Most middle- and upper-class Limeños associated Matute with petty criminals, assaults, and prostitution and would only go there to buy drugs or attend a game at the soccer stadium of Alianza Lima. While I never did any actual fieldwork in Matute and had no intention of using my affiliation with this neighborhood to fashion myself as a street-savvy urban ethnographer, my experiences there did help me to understand a great deal not just about what it meant to transgress social and class boundaries in Peru, but also about the privileges of whiteness operating in the Peruvian context. Ultimately, it was my position as an outsider to the Peruvian social and racial order that gave me the creative license and privileged positionality to transgress social boundaries without facing any major consequences.

In the Mantaro Valley, the presence of foreign students, researchers, NGO workers, and mining engineers was not at all uncommon at the time. My anthropological fascination with provincial ways of life, the migration trajectories of people from the area, and my fluency in Spanish yet lack of Limeño affect and symbolic capital, made me a perhaps less threatening interlocutor for provincial Peruvians who longed for the validation of their mobile projects and aspirations so often denied them within Peru’s dominant social order. Still, through their mobility and performative self-fashioning, my informants constantly transgressed and subverted whatever categories I mobilized in my own attempt to understand their experiences and self-positioning to the point where I was always uneasy about what to finally call them in my ethnographic representations. Eventually, I chose to use the term “migrant,” but occasionally I also use class- and place-based categories such as “nonelite Andean Peruvians,” “Mantaro Valley residents,” or, when referring to people from particular localities, terms such as Urcumarquinos, Matahuasinos, or Huancaínos. Well aware of its pejorative connotations, I use the term cholo to evoke the urban imaginary of invasion of the city by the common Indian and to indicate the profound uneasiness that urban elites historically have felt and continue to feel about the mobility of the subaltern.

When starting the research in the U.S. locations in 2004–05 my prior knowledge of the Peruvian context became both an asset and a menace,
Introduction

probably a general condition of research in transnational settings. When I readily participated in Urcumarquino festivities in Maryland, dressed as a Jaujina (a woman from Jauja) for the traditional corta monte dance which I had learned to dance in the valley, my Urcumarquino friends were generally pleased and took my gesture as an act of recognition not just of their “culture,” but also of them as people. This in turn granted me some social legitimacy and recognition as a culturally competent subject, especially among rural migrants in Maryland and Washington, D.C. But my familiarity with particular transnational family networks or with particular persons’ premigration life trajectories was also occasionally perceived with suspicion and unease, especially by migrants who were trying hard to start over, leave their rural Peruvian pasts behind, and produce themselves as “Americans” and as modern metropolitan subjects; it was almost as if they imagined that I would hold them accountable to their premigration selves and social obligations. Of course it was not my intention to “out” anyone from their claims to particular social identities and belongings, but such incidents served as a reminder of how the transnational circulation of people, information, and images has made social consciousness span various borders and social contexts; a reflexivity that many scholars attribute to modernity itself.

A Road Map

The book is divided into three parts which together illustrate the ways in which Andean migrants strive to become transnationally mobile and how they come to realize and reenvision themselves and their communities in the process. Part I, titled “Cosmopolitan Desires,” focuses on the histories and current practices of mobility through which inhabitants of the central Andes of Peru imagine and produce themselves as mobile and cosmopolitan subjects even as they chart unauthorized and unconventional pathways to transnational mobility. Chapter 1 offers an overview of the Mantaro region’s historic articulation with global markets and cosmopolitan ways of life, which produced various social and technological infrastructures that precede the more recent transnational circulation of labor migrants from this area and shaped valley inhabitants’ experience and imaginings of modernity and transnational mobility in important ways. To illustrate how present-day transnational
migration operates within this broader history of Andean modernity, circulation, mobility, and travel, I discuss the migration stories of two young women from different towns in the valley: Inés from Matahuasi and Domitila from Urcumarca. By examining these two stories I demonstrate that transnational mobility is variously imagined, experienced, practiced, and corporealized in contemporary Peru, but that it is never inseparable from long-standing moral and cultural imperatives about class mobility exemplified in expressions such as “getting ahead” (*salir adelante*) and “improving oneself” (*superarse*).

Despite the aspirations of many valley residents to travel abroad, transnational mobility in the post-9/11 era is not a resource all Peruvians can access equally. Migrants of provincial and lower-class backgrounds must often extend themselves through objects, technologies, and embodied skills to realize their migration projects and they do so with guidance and professional help from *tramitadores* (document fixers) and other service providers in Peru’s growing and extremely profitable migration industry. Chapter 2 examines how aspiring migrants navigate the world of document fixers, loan sharks, travel agents, lawyers, notaries, and state bureaucrats, including consular staff and U.S. immigration officials, in preparation for international migration. As I detail these practices, interactions, and relationships, I also provide accounts of the institutions, technologies, social and cultural forms, and relationships that shape and constrain migrants’ efforts. The chapter also discusses the complex politics of race and class that undergird the historically unequal access to mobility in Peru and in turn intersects with U.S. racialization of Latin American migrants that begins with their first encounters with U.S. consular staff in Lima.

The efforts of my informants to produce themselves in response to the demands of the migration process did not end once they had left Peru and arrived in the United States. Part II, titled “Transnational Societies” focuses on the ongoing strivings of Peruvian migrants abroad to remain emotionally connected and relevant in the everyday lives of their families in Peru and socially visible in the communities they left behind. I examine the affective and moral economy that shapes migrants’ gendered and racial social positioning within the context of transnational families and communities. Upon arrival in the United States most novice migrants were constantly preoccupied with maintaining the social
bonds of kinship with family and relatives left behind. They did this via long-distance communication, remitting small amounts of money from their meager entry-level salaries in the U.S. service economy, and by circulating a variety of material and media objects. Chapter 3 examines how U.S.-based migrants forge affective ties with children, caregivers, and other dependents in the Mantaro Valley and in Lima through transnational communication. I evoke the concept of “remote sensing” and expand the standard technical and geographical definition of this term to name the attempts particularly of migrant parents to “feel” and “know” their children’s lives and whereabouts from afar. This communicative, sensory, and mediated practice regularly played out against dominant social norms that cast migrants abroad in a favorable light back home as caring mothers, responsible fathers, dutiful daughters, and reliable and dependable “hijos ausentes,” that is, the absent sons and daughters of their rural communities of origin. I contend that “remote sensing,” in the context of the prolonged separation caused by migration, amplifies rather than ameliorates the social and emotional struggles of transnational families, because participants are often not able to perform according to the roles assigned them by gendered and intergenerational normative frameworks. The chapter ultimately shows how long-distance communication, as a form of social, cultural, and affective practice, is fraught with tension, uncertainty, and power inequalities.

Chapter 4 extends this inquiry into the realm of the visual by analyzing the circulation of three genres of “migrant videos” within one transnational migrant circuit. By examining questions of accountability and power in the cross-contextual circulation of image-objects and by highlighting the role of these mediated images in the making of self and community, I show how video production, consumption, and circulation figure centrally in migrants’ staging of their own social visibility as “worldly” and “cosmopolitan” ex-campesinos in a larger “visual economy” (Poole 1997). Participants in my study were highly invested in monitoring, selecting, and negotiating the criteria by which images of migrant life abroad could be shared with those back in Peru and what in turn had to be made invisible and left out of circulation to avoid rumors, tensions, and accusations within transnational families or larger collectivities of fellow migrants and paisanos. The chapter offers an analysis of situations where particular image-objects escape intended networks
of circulation and move beyond specific audiences, giving rise to “visual evidence” that feeds into and exposes particular rumors and secrets, which in turn may complicate migrants’ efforts of self-fashioning. I show that such revelations have implications for the production of social cohesion within transnational migrant collectivities, and that they ultimately highlight circulating image-objects as a new form of social control and surveillance.

Part III, “Discrepant Publics,” grapples with the tensions surrounding how migrants abroad make claims to membership, rights, and belonging from the realm of the intimate and familial to the ways in which they situate themselves and are situated by others as subjects worthy of citizenship, belonging, and social and cultural recognition within larger nationalist and racial projects and public spheres. Specifically, this last part shows that both home communities and the country of origin remain important contexts for the validation of migrants’ projects of mobility. The two chapters in this section look at how Andean Peruvians both in Peru and in the United States inhabit the public sphere through attempts to situate themselves within ongoing national and racial projects of both countries. Just as when they first arrived in the capital Lima from the Peruvian highlands, Andean migrants in the United States must after years or even decades of living there still justify their migration projects, their presence in particular urban and suburban spaces, and the fact that they are worthy of citizenship and belonging within a larger transnational political and racial economy.

Chapter 5 exposes these issues by examining the yearly “Peruvian Parade” in Paterson, New Jersey. A large-scale public spectacle commemorating Peru’s Independence Day (Fiestas Patrias), though in the standard U.S. format of ethnic parades, this yearly event is a key site for the ongoing resignifiability of “Peruvianness” in the United States. By analyzing issues regarding the parade’s social organization, sponsorship, framing, and wider context, the chapter explores the way this public spectacle not only mediates links between subjectivity and nations (Peru and the United States), but also works to present an image of Peruvians as decent, worthy, and hardworking “immigrants” in the context of a larger post-9/11 political and racial economy in which some groups figure as more deserving of U.S. citizenship and recognition than others.
Chapter 6 approaches the issue of citizenship, membership, and belonging from a different angle. It takes as its point of departure a violent incident in the town of Urcumarca, to discuss how Urcumarquino migrants in Maryland and Washington, D.C., who historically have not enjoyed full citizenship in Peru, seek to reposition themselves as citizens from abroad within the larger neoliberal project of the Peruvian labor-exporting state. In recent years, the Peruvian state has sought to incorporate its emigrant population into a redefined national imaginary that extends beyond Peru's borders. Yet not all Peruvians are heralded as “national heroes” and as valuable and productive citizens of what government officials call El Quinto Suyo (“the fifth region”), in reference to the Quechua term for the Inca Empire Tawantinsuyu, meaning “the four regions.” But whereas transnational mobility for some has become a virtue, for others it remains a liability. The last chapter highlights how state officials’ glamorization of a generic category of “Peruvians abroad” works to efface the actual and continued effects of profound social and racial inequalities that affect contemporary Peru as well as the mobility of its Andean population.

The Conclusion considers the general implications of this book for mobile populations worldwide and shows that the insights generated from this case study speak beyond the Peruvian-U.S. divide. I also ponder the possible future scenarios of migration in the Peruvian context. In this regard it is not unimportant that the bulk of the research conducted for this book was done before the global financial crisis, at a time when outward migration from Peru was still escalating. In recent years, as Peru has become one of the world’s star economies and Latin America’s posterchild of allegedly successful neoliberal economic development with an expanding urban middle class, researchers and state officials have been quick to announce the return of Peruvians and the end of massive out-migration as we saw it during the 1990s and early 2000s. This book cautions against making quick assumptions about what Peru’s economic boom might mean for migration flows long-term. To the eyes of this researcher laboring people from the Andes will continue to go abroad in significant numbers to take up entry-level jobs in deeply racially and socially segregated foreign labor markets—not only because they can no longer afford to eat the quinoa their communi-
ties produce for affluent health food chains in the United States and Europe—but because their past and present lives are intimately tied up in global and transnational processes of circulation through which they reimagine themselves and their communities in ways that are always contingent and inconclusive, but equally full of hope that life will unfold and flourish in a better time and place.