ON THE LINE: THE WORKING LIVES OF LATINOS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE NEW SOUTH

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Abstract

VANESA RIBAS: On the Line: The Working Lives of Latinos and African Americans in the New South
(Under the direction of Jacqueline M. Hagan)

This dissertation is an ethnography of a meatpacking plant in North Carolina, where I held a job as a production worker for sixteen months totaling more than 3,500 hours of participant observation between August 2009 and December 2010. I also spent countless hours socializing outside the factory with worker-friends I came to know very well over two years, and conducted twenty-five in-depth interviews with Latina/o and African American workers. In this project, I examine how Latina/o migrants are becoming incorporated in the New South. In particular, I draw attention to how groups develop a sense of their group position in a complex map of hierarchical relations through boundary processes that are structured in key domains, in this case, the workplace. In addition to preconditioning factors such as ethnoracial panoramas in origin countries, the racial/ethnic composition of labor and the authority structure, variation in labor discipline regimes, and social perceptions about the nature of particular kinds of work and the qualities of particular types of workers are all important dimensions that account for how Latinos carve out their place in the New American South. In marked contrast to the fears of some scholars and pundits, and against the conclusions put forth in recent research on the topic of intergroup relations in the U.S. South, African American workers do not talk or behave as if they are especially threatened by economic, political, or cultural competition from Latinos/migrants, and this finding holds regardless of whether African Americans are the majority or minority in a specific department. On the other hand, Latina/os deploy an elaborate array of racialized action

that is substantially inflected negatively towards African Americans, that reflects and reinforces ethnoracial boundaries between Latinos and African Americans, represents definitively Latinos' determination to achieve incorporation as nonblacks, and may bolster the hegemony of whiteness in the emerging order.

To the women and men whose vitality ebbs and flows with the workday at Swine's, whose spirit clamors for dignity and respect, who demand their day of reckoning.

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PREFACE

This is a story about people whose lives are on the line. They work in a meatpacking plant, twelve-hour shifts, day after never-ending day. Bodies ache. Lives and limbs are in peril. Hours of repetitive, dangerous, grueling labor pounds their spirit, their dignity beaten down as a matter of business.

This is a story of how working class immigrants from Latin America and native-born African American workers, who spend most of their waking hours working on the line, negotiate social boundaries and construct identities as they labor alongside one another. This is also a story of how I, as a sociologist, situated myself on the line, to understand first-hand the nature of changing race and ethnic relations in the New South.

In the summer of 2009, when I was deciding on my dissertation topic, the American South was in the midst of a demographic and social transformation, one that brought several million Latina/o migrants to work in a variety of industries and live in rural and urban communities that had little or no collective memory of immigration. I wanted to know who these newcomers were and how they were becoming a part of the New South. I also wanted to better understand their incorporation experience in the context of a South that is historically defined by black-white relations. I realized that Latinos' introduction to the South played a constitutive role in the spectacular transformation of the region's system of intergroup relations. From earlier research on intergroup relations, I knew that these questions depended on the social relations and

economic circumstances in which migrants were embedded. I realized that in order to really understand if and how Latina/os were gaining a sense of belonging within the American racial and class stratification systems, I needed to go where working class migrants and native-born Americans spend most of their waking hours—the workplace. Because the food processing industry, with its insatiable appetite for labor, has been such an important draw for Latina/o migrants and remains a significant employer for working class African Americans, I decided to situate my research in this work environment. Finally, I wanted to understand at the ground level whether this New South was being shaped by rising tensions between Latina/o newcomers and African Americans as some scholars have argued, and if so, how this related to Latina/os' emergent sense of their place within the American stratified system of belonging.

To this end, I decided to get a job at a meatpacking plant in North Carolina. In July 2009 I packed up my belongings and moved to a rural community of around 10,000 people surrounded by hog and poultry farms and corn and tobacco fields. At the end of July 2009, after waiting in line overnight outside the factory gates with several dozen people eager to apply for a job at Swine Inc., I was hired as a regular production worker.[1] I began my job as a meatpacker in the Marination Department on August 5th, 2009, where I worked for seven months before transferring to the Loin Boning and Packing Department, where I worked another nine months until December 2010. Marination was a small, majority African American department with a white-dominated authority structure, while Loin Boning and Packing was a large, majority-Latino department with an African American-dominated authority structure. Although my

[1] Names for all people and U.S. places are pseudonyms.

initiation in the Marination Department was accidental – this was simply the department I was assigned to work in when I was first hired – my transfer to the Loin Boning and Packing Department was intentional. I requested a transfer to this department so that I could observe intergroup relations in a context that differed greatly in composition and working conditions from the first department I worked in. While I spent the preponderance of my time toiling in these two departments, I also had a chance to work in and become acquainted with other major plant departments, including the Kill Floor, Cut Floor, Hamboning, Bacon Slice, Pork Chop, Dry Salt, and Belly Conversion. Altogether, the data I gathered for this project is comprised of over sixteen months of participant observation working the production lines at Swine's represented in five hundred single-spaced pages of field notes, as well as twenty-five in-depth interviews with Latina/o and African American workers collected from December 2010, when I quit the job, and April 2012.

Sitting on a beach in Wilmington with my girlfriend, just days before I was to start my job, we talked excitedly about this unexpected adventure - unexpected because I had not anticipated it would be so easy for me to get hired, and an adventure because this was a sociologist's foray into a world normally hidden from scientific observation. While I was deeply concerned that I would not make it beyond a few days, I was hoping I could last at the plant for a few months, enough time to observe intergroup relations at the workplace and perhaps even develop casual friendships with co-workers. In the end, I worked at the factory for sixteen months, and over that period of time I developed intimate friendships with workers with whom I spent thousands of hours laboring with on the line and eating, drinking, and dancing with off the line. It was not easy. At times I was overwhelmed with loneliness, confusion, isolation, and

frustration. At times, my body experienced injury and pain, the kind of which I had never felt before and in ways I had not known were possible. The ruthless regimen of work and subjugation literally crushed my spirit, producing feelings of desperation, hopelessness, and anger, ultimately relenting to an alienated self-discipline I had acquired.

As a regular worker, first in the Marination Department and later on the loin boning and packing lines, I directly observed and experienced the life of a meatpacking worker. As far as I know, management was unaware of my ulterior motives for working at the plant, so my status as a Ph.D. student did not afford me preferential treatment. The Human Resources recruiter who interviewed me barely glanced at the education and work experience I listed on my application, let alone inquire about the Sociology professor listed as my reference, Jacqueline Hagan. I was in that sense just another warm body. But because I was identified by others as white, "from here," and possessed bilingual skills, I received preferential treatment relative to other working class Latina/o newcomers. Supervisors shielded me from the toughest jobs, personally warning me that work on the straight knife or whizzard knife would "ruin" me. Apparently, this was of no concern to them regarding the hundreds of other women and men, mostly Central American and Mexican, who worked knife jobs on the lines. They were perhaps not fully persons, their bodies perfectly suitable for ruining.

Because I am a native Spanish speaker from Puerto Rico, I was frequently called on to translate supervisor speeches and reprimands, and sometimes to gather signatures from Spanish-speakers for weekly "safety training" forms. Usually, I did these tasks with displeasure because I didn't want to be seen by workers as management's favorite, making supervisors wonder out loud why I would not be ecstatic to get a moment's break from real work. And when I sought medical treatment for my hands – I had acquired occupationally-induced carpal tunnel syndrome

in a matter of weeks following my transfer to the brutal Loin Boning Department after seven months working in the Marination Department, and six of my fingers were numb for several months from bagging those loins – I insisted without much resistance that I be moved to a different line. Nobody in Human Resources challenged the medical leave I got from an outside doctor. In stark contrast, many foreign-born workers were afraid to seek care even from the company nurses, who generally provided no medically significant assistance anyway – hot wax hand baths being their universal therapy – and probably unlawfully impeded actual treatment. They were convinced that seeking medical attention would get them fired, especially if they were unauthorized workers. Indeed, Human Resources staff told them as much.

How does one put into words the rage that workers feel when supervisors threaten to replace them with workers who will not go to the bathroom in the course of a fourteen-hour day of hard labor, even if it means wetting themselves on the line? Or the despair a worker feels as she realizes at the twelfth hour of unremitting labor that there is still a lot of work to do, and she has to pick up her children from the babysitter, prepare a meal for her family, and be ready in a handful of hours to do it all over again? Or the pain a worker goes through in submitting her hands to the brutal repetitive trauma of a job cutting or packing meat, helpless as her nails turn purple and fall out from sheer effort or the muscles in her hand contract and spasm uncontrollably or protuberant knots develop along the joints in her fingers and wrist visible to the naked eye? Or the throbbing discomfort of damp, freezing hands and feet that workers endure laboring in wet, below 40 degree temperatures, the recurring sinus infections, the stabbing back pain? Or the scorching fury that swells inside from the incessant assaults to workers' dignity as

supervisors subordinate their humanity to the value of hogs so that consumers can have fresh pork on their table?

These are the jobs that don't go away. This is the kind of work that hasn't changed all that much despite a century of astonishing innovation. Many of these jobs would be immediately recognizable to Upton Sinclair, for their reliance on sheer effort and physical resilience made this modern packing plant a hostile jungle to cut through. These are the good jobs, the ones that pay *mucho dinero*, but only if you work all those hours will you get that check. This is the most onerous work a long-slogging migrant has ever had. This work is for people who just got here and still owe their coyote. These are the good jobs, but not for anyone's kids. This work is for people who don't have papers. This money is costly to earn. On a particularly bad day, workers say, the devil might as well whisk you away. Good luck to the departed, and *bienvenido* to the ones who just arrived! Tomorrow no one will remember you were here, but at moments you felt indispensable to the mission of production. These jobs can be more like a strange supermarket gig or more like slavery, but you probably won't get to choose. This job is depressing. After this job, there's nothing left to do but go back to the country you came from. After this job, that door will be closed forever so you better save it for when you are sure it's the best shot you got. These are the jobs that people with PhDs designate as 'unskilled,' but these skillful geniuses wouldn't be capable of *learning* how to do the work properly if they were given a month to train and a manual filled with diagrams to study (and they would never be afforded such luxuries). These are the jobs you cannot believe haven't been mechanized. These are the good jobs, the ones that command workers respect in their communities, but never respect on the job.

Although I did not truly understand it before, the experience of oppressive exploitation profoundly shapes how Latina/o migrants view their position within a stratified system of

belonging, and is inextricably tied to their perceptions about the position occupied by other groups with whom they are meaningfully engaged, such as African Americans. The abusive treatment, the routine indignities, the incessant surveillance of supervisors steeled my determination to be a witness. The constant jibing from fellow workers about those who cannot hack it and quit made it difficult to give up, if only out of a sense of shame and personal failure. Whenever a new worker started, my co-workers sized them up, their work ability, effort, and ethic, and most often they decided the worker was going to quit very soon, maybe even that same day. Sympathy was necessarily in short supply, rationed out in small doses and reserved for the gloomiest of situations, like death or deportation or natural disasters. For as much as my co-workers understood how tough the work was, slackers and quitters drew their ridicule and scorn. Being able to withstand the hiding of a workday at Swine's was a badge of honor, its perverse reward the distressing certainty of another hiding to come. Every so often, a worker would tell me how surprised they were I was still working there. When I came back to work after my one-week medical leave, many co-workers said they were sure I had quit, and when I was still there months later, they would say "*Ya te acostumbraste a este abuso ah!*" [You've gotten used to this abuse huh!].

I felt an unceasing commitment to my project, a sense that I was experiencing something that few social scientists ever had and ever would. At times I felt sudden surges of sheer euphoria, coming to my sociological senses out of a work-induced automaton mode and seeing all around me the nearly synchronized movements of hundreds of bodies, hearing the rhythmic clanking of machinery, feeling the shock of cold air on my face and the nearly frozen wet meat turning my fingers into popsicles under damp gloves. There was a mesmerizing quality to the everyday shop floor performance: the loin boners leaning in sequentially to make their cuts as

16,000 loins made their way down the lines like a choppy succession of waves, saw operators towering over the boning lines where the leftover ribs were separated from backbones like conductors at a meat symphony, packers with unseen strength stuffing and shaking huge anaconda-like loins into torturously small bags. At other times, the anticipation of verbal lashings that punctuated the entrancing choreography of ceaseless production was all that kept the mind from surrendering to a deep slumber.

Swine's was more than just a factory where 1,200 people disassembled hogs on the line. Because the work day could be so eternal, social functions that might ordinarily take place outside the workplace – everything from dating to purchasing goods – took place inside the factory gates. On short breaks, a young couple might share a coffee or some fruit, squatting together under a line of lunch boxes that hung across the walls like the industrial version of mistletoe. On a daily basis, in the locker room shared by Loin Boning, Cut Floor, and Kill Floor workers, the last few minutes of lunch break took on the haggling air of a flea market. Women gathered around workers who sold bras and thongs, perfumes, shoes, Mary Kay products and assorted cosmetics, and even magical potions advertised as far superior to the HerbaLife that others offered, promising rejuvenation and vitality. Several women sold numbers for an informal lottery the Hondurans had set up (*chica*), tempting would-be-buyers with inside information about numbers thought to be especially lucky. Other women collected money from contributors to the *tanda*, a cooperative lending scheme many Honduran workers participated in. Doña Isadora had no trouble selling any *baleadas*, the typical Honduran breakfast plate, leftover from her morning sale, and these were surreptitiously slipped into a locker to be eaten at third break.

Just before lunch break was over, as the uproar from supervisors pacing the halls outside the locker room intensified, and full-throated shouts of "Let's go, Boning! Let's go, ladies!" got louder and closer, the locker room took on the air of a frenzied theater backstage, as women hurried to reapply their makeup, blow their runny noses, rinse the tidbits of food from their teeth, refasten the colorful bandanas worn beneath their hair nets and hard hats, and perhaps grab a clean white butcher coat, dousing it with perfume. There was most definitely a meatpacker style displayed with a proud swagger, and Latinas set the fashion trend, scrutinizing deviants with a contemptuous glare and pitying the sorry disheveled appearance of new hires, with their lopsided hard hats, their butcher coats drenched in blood, their snot-encrusted nostrils, their wax-coated ear plugs dangling freely to the sides.

Even in the harsh work environment of a meatpacking plant, workers found ways to make the day more bearable, chatting with whoever worked alongside them even if it meant inventing hybrid tongues ("You like *mucho chaca chaca*?"), posing exhibits of various cuts of meat arranged in obscene ways to get a laugh (pork tenderloin penis with meat scrap testicles was a crowd favorite), dropping double entendres like only a job packing meat allows ("No me lo estás metiendo bien! [You're not putting it in right!]"). Crude humor, especially of a sexual nature, was commonplace among workers, and was an important avenue for communication between Latinos and African Americans, perhaps because laughter and sex have universal appeal. Every so often, workers spontaneously disrupted the numbing monotony, howling plaintively into the frosty air like jungle beasts to elicit the echoing howls of other worker-wolves far out of sight, the melancholic lament of the forsaken fading into the humming background of moving parts ("AAAUUUUU!"). These were necessary diversions, the delirium of outrageous performances far more desirable to the dreariness of hours of deafening silence

alongside fellow workers. Candy, the forbidden currency on the shop floor, was highly coveted by workers, a valued commodity that enhanced the popularity of frequent givers. Candy staved off hunger and kept drowsy workers alert. More importantly, I came to believe, candy disguised the wretched breath that could disgust workers laboring in close proximity to one another, and which no one wanted to be associated with lest they get a reputation for being a *chancho* [pig].

On Thursday mornings, a stream of new hires coursed through the plant, their wide-eyed ranks dwindling as the trainer assigned workers to their respective stations. Paraded around the production floor like fresh jail bait, the lines erupted into raucous hooting and hollering, knives and meat hooks banging loudly on steel. If they even made it, in the next month of their lives the work schedule would reset their bowel movements and make them uniquely aware of the precious value of time. The full-body throttling of packing enormous whole loins would literally shake the farts out of them. The unremarkable but recurring act of clenching their hands as they grabbed hold of a knife or loin or bag would reveal its true viciousness overnight, when the pulpy muscles of the palms became so tender that turning a doorknob was an excruciating feat. If they made it through that first month, they would have come to know what it feels like to wear away with work the very fibers of their being.

Over time, I developed close friendships with people I cared about, six of whom (Cristina, Thomas, Linda, Rosa, Vincent, and Claudia) will be featured prominently throughout the book. Workers gave me nicknames like “Scrappy” (because of my squirrelly fighting moves), “La Doctora” (because I was getting a doctorate degree) “Flaca” and “Skinny Winny” (because people thought I was skinny), “La Boricua” (because I am from Puerto Rico), and “Cuca” (because a Salvadoran woman called everyone “Pussyface” [*Cara de cuca*] and soon

“Pussy” evolved into a term of endearment). As I developed relationships with workers who I felt could be key informants for my research, I explained my status as a Sociology student and my purpose in working at Swine’s. This “coming out” process was repeated several dozen times throughout my fieldwork at Swine’s, and continued after I quit the job and proceeded to collect interviews with workers. Especially while working at Swine’s, I wrestled constantly with my multiple co-existing roles as a researcher, worker, and friend, and the difficulties and dilemmas I faced come through in some of the data I present in the chapters to come.

Over the course of my time in the field as I got to know these worker-friends while working at Swine’s and even after leaving the job, I went to lakes, beaches, amusement parks, soccer fields, and county fairs with them. I went to malls, airports, laundromats, drug houses, strip clubs, and movie theaters with them. I went to obstetricians, pediatricians, orthopedists, and ophthalmologists with them. I went to hospitals, social service agencies, courts, and lawyers’ offices with them, and I went to jail to bail them out. I went to birthday parties, baby showers, Halloween trick-or-treats, and New Year’s festivities with them. I went to “Mexican” *discotecas* where I learned to dance *rancheras* and *corridos* and got used to the usual drunken brawling. I went to Latino nightclubs where I was continually shamed for not knowing how to dance *bachata*. I went to an afterhours dive run by a transgendered runaway from Honduras where Latino men paid $20 a drink for the company of a woman. I went to “Black” clubs where handfuls of cash were traded for bottles of Grey Goose and the smell of weed saturated the air. I went to pool halls in Mexican restaurants and “Black” restaurants. I slept in my worker-friends’ beds and they in mine. I cried, laughed, and got angry with them, and they with me. And while much about these experiences won’t make it into this book, the ass-slapping, dirty jokes, flirtations, banter, and small subversions on and off the line, in the locker rooms, in break rooms,

and outside the factory altogether infused each day with levity and added a whole other layer to the social side of laboring.

With time, I came to realize how extensively I had embedded myself in the social world of the factory, and I shuddered at the thought of leaving it all behind. My graduate adviser Jacqueline Hagan and family grew anxious about my reluctance to leave the field. I dreaded the end to what I knew would be the most life-defining experience I would ever have. Even now, it astounds me that over the course of nearly a year and a half working as a meatpacker I managed to avoid "pointing out" as a majority of new hires do (this happens when you accumulate six points at any given time due to absences or leaving before shift end). And yet, what I went through physically, mentally, and emotionally pales in comparison to most workers' experiences. Workers in some departments left a twelve- to fifteen-hour day of punishing physical labor and emotional duress knowing their best hopes for earning a living wage that could provide for their family depended on their ability to relive that day indefinitely into the future. With only a handful of hours to sleep, who had the wherewithal to contemplate alternatives anyway? Many women left work only to get home to children and a husband who had to be cooked for and taken care of, a home that had to be tidied. The unluckiest, who were many, found themselves either currently or in the recent past, locked into extremely unequal domestic arrangements with men, who all too often were physically abusive to them. Some workers added to their already endless work day an hour-long commute. Like many migrant workers in the New South, some dealt with the precarious condition of being an unauthorized worker.

Current research on the incorporation experiences of Latina/o migrants in the New South paints a mixed picture of the phenomenon. While most scholars would probably agree that

Latina/os have contributed immensely to economic growth in the region, and comprise an important segment of the new Southern working class, some research suggests a far less optimistic outlook regarding relations between Latina/o migrants and native-born groups, especially African Americans. If the contentious, but rather superficial, portrayal accurately reflects the character of social relations between Latina/o migrants and native-born groups with whom they are meaningfully engaged, this would undoubtedly influence the ways in which Latina/os in the New South develop an understanding of their position as a group within the American stratified system of belonging. In taking my place on the meatpacking lines, laboring alongside Latina/o and African American women and men, I hoped to gain a first-hand understanding of this phenomenon, situating it in the most crucial social domain of working class lives – work. The stories that unfold throughout the book cast a harsh light on the very palpable struggles to make it in which Latino/as find themselves playing a starring role, far beyond the objectified view of them as mere cogs in a wheel.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

LIVES ON THE LINE: A NEW SOUTH IS FORMED

It is Friday morning and there are seven of us working a rib trimming line: Cristina, Thomas, Rosa, Linda, Vincent, Claudia and me. These workers, some Latina migrants, others native-born African Americans, would become among my closest co-workers, my good friends, and my key confidants, and their experiences in the plant and in North Carolina and beyond more generally guide the narratives of this book.

On this particular Friday morning, with knife in hand, Cristina draws the rationale behind her decision to migrate on the table in hog blood. In Honduras, she can hope to make around 700 lempiras per week sewing garments at a *maquiladora*. As Thomas, Linda, Rosa, and I look on, she scrawls the exchange rate in diluted red numbers: 18 lempiras to 1 dollar. Cristina never imagined she'd end up here in this countryside breaking her back working a knife job. If anything, she tells me with a chuckle, having worked at a Korean-owned garment factory outside San Pedro Sula for seven years from the age of 15, she had entertained fantasies of running off to Korea. Her husband Ernesto arrived in North Carolina in 1998 right before Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras, leaving the mines, cattle ranches, and dense forests of Olancho to follow his brothers to work in the pork, turkey, and chicken processing plants, livestock farms, and

agricultural fields that dot the landscape and are the backbone of this Southern economy. Cristina joined him seven years later, in 2005.

Now 33, she has worked at Swine's deboning small hams and trimming ribs for two years without missing a day of work, and before this she worked on the knife for two years at Fresh Birds, a large poultry processing plant in Linden. She works without authorization, and has borne and shed three identities other than her own while eking out a living in North Carolina. Today, Cristina and Ernesto are part of a large Honduran community that lives in the multi-county catchment area of the plant, proportionally among the greatest in the country. Cristina prides herself on the quality of her work, relishing the praise of Quality Assurance staff and deriding the quality of other workers' knife skills – like those of Thomas and Rosa – from sharpening the knife to actually using it. Cristina left behind a 4 year old son and 5 year old daughter with her in-laws in Olancho, whom she had lived with in what to me resembled conditions of servitude after Ernesto left. Her daughter made the dangerous journey with another of her husband's brothers several years later, and now 12 years old says without a hint of irony, but much to her parents' amusement, that she wants to be an FBI agent when she grows up; her youngest daughter was born in North Carolina, so her children span the spectrum of migration statuses. Outside the plant, she lives in fear of police checkpoints and deportation, which would mean permanent separation from her husband and children, topics we regularly discuss at the table where I bag or box the ribs she trims.

Working alongside Cristina at the ribs station this Friday morning is Thomas, who like many co-workers respects Cristina's knife skills, often depending on her to sharpen his knives. Thomas is a 53 year old African American who grew up in a nearby rural North Carolina town. In the 1990s, he worked for Hansen Farms with a night crew loading turkeys from farms across

North and South Carolina. At that time, the loading crews were composed mostly of local black men and the poultry farm labor was heavily Latino. The pay was by the load, and Thomas says it averaged out to a good wage. In a very matter-of-fact tone, Thomas attributes shifts in the composition of labor across animal farming and processing industries to increased competition for jobs due to the influx of Hispanics and their growing share of the applicant pool in the context of regular turnover in these jobs, in almost exactly those words. After a brief move to Virginia, where he followed his substance-abusing partner and worked at a large distribution center as a forklift operator, Thomas returned to North Carolina and started to work at Swine's in 2001.

Sometimes, Thomas works with the knife, trimming ribs. Other times, he is able to escape knife work and instead bags ribs, which is considered a lighter task. But there are also times when Thomas has to lead in producing orders of "curlies" – a rib that is skinned using a small hand-held hook and that Cristina says is for rich people. The work is grueling, *un trabajo perro* [dog's work, hard work], Salvadoran fellow rib trimmer and skinner Hernán calls it, but Thomas is the fastest at this work. His form, efficiency, and speed are impressive to watch, skinning ribs at twice the rate of the next fastest worker. No matter what type of work he is doing – whether trimming, bagging, or skinning – Thomas's laboring has a distinctive rhythm to it, a certain swaying or rocking of his tall, lanky body to the cacophonous melody of machinery. On lunch break, Thomas hurries out to the parking lot across from the factory, immersing himself in the quiet solitude of his pickup truck. Aisha, a young black packing worker, insists she has smelled liquor on his breath, but it never did waft my way. On short breaks, Thomas leans into the fence outside the factory while smoking his cigarette, staring through the links to the outside world, rebuilding his momentum, lost in thought, forlorn.

Just as she is this Friday morning, Rosa usually works alongside Cristina either at the ribs station or on the ham-end boning line. Rail-thin and slightly hunch-backed, Rosa's receding gums give her mouth a concave appearance, making it look like she is missing all her teeth, not just the bottom set. She is a 45 year old Salvadoran woman who first migrated to Los Angeles from Santa Ana, where she lived for 10 years before returning to El Salvador in order to regularize her status through her then husband. She returned in 2006, bringing her three American-born, but Salvadoran-raised daughters to live in North Carolina, and they remind Rosa how much they resent her for having left them in El Salvador every chance they get. Despite her efforts to steer them towards righteousness through her Evangelical church, each of Rosa's daughters compound her troubled life, one with a violent and substance-abusing spouse, another with marital dissolutions and consecutive childbearing, and the youngest with school desertion, drug arrests, and generalized teenage defiance. Rosa also has a 3 year old son with her most recent husband, a 25 year old Honduran man who works on the boning line and abandoned her for another woman, though she still meets him clandestinely against her better judgment. She is a rebellious yet individualistic worker, and is unexpectedly hilarious and foul-mouthed, though her ex-husband never knew her that way. Calling people *cara de cuca* [pussyface] is a habit of hers, one that Latina co-workers have picked up as an affectionate nickname (now it's *my* nickname), and it's a Spanish phrase that, like *chaca chaca* [slang for sex, like hanky panky], African American coworkers have become acquainted with. A reporter of all Swine's-related gossip and news, Rosa's loose lips are immortalized in her nickname, Radio Bemba. She has been working at Swine's since then deboning small hams and trimming ribs, or bagging ribs when she can avoid knife work, which she frequently attempts leading to confrontations with supervisors. Rosa is a coffee fiend, and on the unsanctioned and ever-contentious mid-morning bathroom break she

will take her contraband thermos out of her locker and into a stall, where I imagine her sitting on the toilet seat sipping subversively from the lid.

Linda, an African American born in North Carolina but raised in New Jersey, often pairs with Cristina or Thomas at the ribs station, as she did on this Friday morning. Linda recently turned 60 but seems to be going on 30. She is such a motivated worker that not only is she exempted by Latino/as in their usually critical characterizations of African Americans' work performance, but some even resent her for being such a *cagapalo* [stick shitter], making sure every last bit of meat gets processed, and concerning herself more than others with product specifications and quality. Despite getting annoyed with her for this, some Latina co-workers, especially Rosa, tell Linda in choppy English and crude sign language about the troubles they are having with their kids or husbands. Linda is a proud worker, and her high self-regard is evident when she describes Cristina and Rosa as "the women that cut meat for me" instead of herself as packing meat for them. Although she has roots in rural North Carolina, Linda spent much of her adult life in New Jersey, which is reflected in her accent, made even more distinctive by her deep, raspy smokers' voice and gravelly laugh. Her lips shimmer with a berry-infused gloss, the smell of which can become dizzying after hours of direct inhalation. Before starting at Swine's in 2008, she managed a liquor store in Parsons but lost this job, I am told, after she punched out a rude customer. She is a chatty worker unless she is in a bad mood, and her tendency to want to coordinate and lightly control the work process earned her the uncomplimentary nickname "Grandma" from some of the younger black workers.

Vincent is a 29 year old African American from Wadeville, North Carolina who trims ribs at a table near Cristina and Linda, and who I am sometimes paired to work with, though he is paired with someone else on this Friday morning. He has a thick country accent and a peculiar

laugh as though his jaw is wired shut, and his mouth barely opens to let out his characteristic cackle, which turns out is because of oral surgery he had a few years back. He did a two-year stretch in jail on a drug charge and has worked at Swine's since 2009. Although Vincent normally works on the knife trimming ribs, he is called on to cover for others as a pallet jack driver or as a trimmer on the loin boning line from time to time, jobs he previously held. His cousin Kim worked with me in the Marination department before my transfer to Loin Boning, and he is shocked she lasted as long as she did because, in his words, she can't keep a job; his lesbian cousin Little G, whom he and others think is "lazy as hell," is a packer in Loin Boning as well.

Vincent is self-conscious about the fact that he has four kids with four different women, but is also proud to be a responsible provider for his girls. He is a very funny guy, and part of his routine is an incessant sexual bravado and banter that is more comical than threatening, but sometimes irritating and tiresome. Vincent is a lay social scientist, constantly raising social and political topics of conversation drawing on his perceptive observations. His conversational, jokester personality makes it so he is not taken so seriously by co-workers. Vincent, some Latina co-workers have remarked more approvingly than not, gets the work out even though he doesn't pay attention to the quality; still, others call him a *pendejo huevón* [lazy ass]. In the summer of 2011, Vincent lost his home to the devastating tornadoes that swept through North Carolina, days after calling to tell me he won the job bid for a coveted position as a mechanic in the maintenance department.

Claudia is at the end of the line this Friday morning as always, operating the machine that seals the ribs that Cristina, Thomas, and Vincent trim and that Linda and I bag. She has worked at Swine's for 9 years, first bagging loins on the line and later operating the *tortuga* [turtle], the

machine that seals the bags containing ribs and other meat products. Previously she worked at an appliance factory in Roseville and briefly at a hog farm, though she is always quick to remind me she had been a secretary along with her mother at the town hall in Aguilares, El Salvador. She made the arduous journey to North Carolina in 1999 from her small town near San Salvador to reunify with her then husband Marcos, a man who has mostly dedicated himself to activities in the underground economy of migration, spent time in a U.S. prison, and is once-deported, and whom she has since left because he was cheating on her. Four years after her arrival, her husband's sister brought their 6 year old son along with him on his undocumented journey to the U.S.

After an earthquake struck El Salvador in 2001, Claudia and her son received Temporary Protected Status, which they must have renewed every 18 months at a cost of around $900. She and her husband later had a daughter, who at 9 years old expresses the multiple and conflicting ideas she learns at home and at school in such direct, deceptively simple questions as "Hey Janet [my first name], is racism bad?" Claudia is deeply enamored of all things Mexican, from the music to the men (but not the women, who she jokes all have moustaches they can twirl between their fingers). On the weekends it is typical for her to go to a *disco mexicana* with friends or a boyfriend and dance *musica norteña* all night while slinging Modelos. She is an attractive, alluring 36 year old who prefers to date much younger men, preferably around half her age. Claudia is besieged at her workstation on a daily basis by a stream of admirers, regular workers and supervisors alike be they Latino, African American, or white, married or not, young and old, who shower her with offerings of chocolate, romantic CD mixes, religious charm bracelets, and pledges of much more.

This is the new Southern working class. Cristina, Thomas, Rosa, Linda, Vincent, and Claudia illustrate the immense diversity of social positions and experiences that exist within the new Southern working class both across and within racial/ethnic groups. The U.S. South has changed dramatically over the last twenty-five years. The historical racial binary made up of African Americans and whites has given way to a new configuration that now includes Latina/o migrants from Mexico and Central America, and from traditional gateway states like California and Texas. In North Carolina, the Latino population grew from 76,726 to 506,206 between 1990 and 2004 (Kasarda and Johnson 2006). By 2010, Latinos made up 8 percent of the state's population, and between 15 and 20 percent of the population in some counties, such as "Clark" County, where I conducted my research (U.S. Census Bureau date).

These figures do not adequately convey the fine-grained and multidimensional diversity of this area, probably imagined by outsiders to be quite homogenous, dull, and old-fashioned. Just at Swine's I met people with origins in ten Latin American countries, multiple generations of international migrants and their descendants, of all varieties of legal status, African Americans who had never left North Carolina, and others who had returned to their Southern roots after living in New York, New Jersey, or Washington D.C. their whole lives, Coharies and other Native Americans, and most exotically among the workers, even a few whites. Among my fellow workers there were ministers, heathens, mystics, reformed prostitutes, ex-cons, and fugitive gun dealers. Some had been Central American rebel fighters while others were right-wing sympathizers. And to my surprise, there were many (mostly African American) gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

Unlike the majority of studies of new migrant destinations, in which Mexican migrants are the sole group of interest, Hondurans, Salvadorans, and Mexicans are all three important for

understanding emerging social realities from Knobbs to Knoxville, Boyd to Bennettsburg, Hensley to Kerr Hill, Leesville to Linden, Gardenia to Roberts Grove, Faircloth to Fall River. In fact, the multi-county region in North Carolina that forms a single labor catchment area for the poultry and hog production and processing industries includes communities with some of the country's highest proportions of Central Americans, contributing to the 25 percent of non-Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban-origin Latinos living in the state in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). Some are newcomers; others long term settlers, making the South both an area of new and *maturing* destinations. The African American population in the South is increasingly heterogeneous as well, as black Americans have been leaving Northeastern cities to (re)settle in the South since the latter 20th century but at an accelerated pace in the last decade, resulting in the highest percentage of black Americans residing in the South since 1960. Indeed, for some black Americans who have moved to cities like Atlanta and their suburban enclaves in search of better job opportunities, the economic, political, and cultural changes that have transformed this region represent the hopeful promise of a New South (Tavernise and Gebeloff 2011; Hunt, Hunt, and Falk 2008).

Through an ethnography of a large hog processing plant in North Carolina that has been undergoing the demographic and economic restructuring process for at least 20 years, where I worked approximately 3,500 hours over 16 months at several entry-level jobs, as well as 25 in-depth interviews with workers, I examine how the social organization of labor shapes the social and economic incorporation experiences of Latinos/migrants in the contemporary American South. In most literature on immigration, incorporation is a general concept that refers to the ways in which "outsiders" are brought into the national fold of immigrant-receiving countries, with an emphasis on outcomes as incorporation occurs in various domains of life (e.g.

socioeconomic, health, education) or through particular paradigms or modes of incorporation (e.g. assimilation, segmented assimilation).

These are no doubt important angles from which to study incorporation, but my contribution to the field is a renewed attention to the real-life contexts in which migrants' lives are embedded, and to the real-life encounters with other people that imbue Latino/a migrants' experiences with collective definition. I refocus the study of incorporation, viewing it as an ongoing and active social process of mutual adjustment by which groups both achieve and are assigned particular social locations in a stratified system of belonging. I refer to this more narrow specification of the dynamics of incorporation that pertain to intergroup relations as *prismatic engagement*. The concept of prismatic engagement recognizes that intergroup relations – especially among subordinate groups – are mediated by the statuses and signifiers which dominant groups over-determine. Yet, encounters between such groups are ongoing and the positions they occupy within a shifting stratified system of belonging are emergent rather than resolved. The position of whiteness at the core of this system means that subordinate groups' relations with one another are refracted through their relations with whites and whiteness. Expanding on what critical race scholars Barbara Flagg (1993) and Haney Lopez (1996) have termed the "transparency phenomenon," intergroup relations among subordinate groups in a system structured around white dominance take on prismatic qualities.

Refocusing the study of intergroup relations in the incorporation process as *prismatic engagement* reveals the dynamic qualities of incorporation as an active process rather than a series of outcomes, calls attention to the fact that incorporation is a group-based process involving both the particular group of interest and those groups that meaningfully engage with it, and recognizes that the social system into which a group becomes incorporated is characterized

by positions of unequal status. Viewed through the lens of prismatic engagement, the process of incorporation is bound to be rife with struggles over the positions that groups occupy within such a system. Work is a key interactional arena for the *mutual* construction of group identities through boundary processes that in turn contributes to the broader incorporation process, that is, to the emergent 'structures of feeling'[2] composed in part by multivalent intermediating relationships between groups. This study treats work as a field of human life rich in meaning-making through interaction across vertical and horizontal relations defined by the particular social roles, statuses, and relationships being examined, which include but are not limited to class and relation to authority, nativity, citizenship and authorization status, racial ascription, and gender.

Situating this study of active and ongoing incorporation processes through attention to intergroup relations, or what I refer to as *prismatic engagement*, in the context of work is crucial for several reasons. At the most basic level, work is where working class people spend a majority of their waking hours, and it is the context through which different groups are most likely to interact. In the case of certain departments at this plant, such as the Loin Boning Department where I worked for nine months, workers spend a majority of all the hours in a day at this single location, between twelve and fifteen hours each day, five to six days a week. Work is also a context in which a set of observable conditions are structured that likely shape how people understand and give expression to group boundaries. The racial/ethnic composition of labor and the authority structure, social perceptions about the nature of particular kinds of work and the ascribed qualities of particular types of workers, and variation in labor discipline regimes are important dimensions that shape how Latinos/migrants carve out their place in the New

[2] I adapt this term from Raymond Williams (1977).

American South. Contrary to the suggestion by some scholars that neighborhoods and public spaces like WalMart are now the key sites for studying social relations involving Latinos, I argue emphatically that *work* – as a setting, structure, and process – remains singularly important for understanding the incorporation experience of working class Latino/a migrants, who are, after all, labor migrants. Although preconditioning factors such as racialized stratification systems in origin countries predispose Latina/o migrants to view groups linked to value-laden categories like blackness and whiteness in particular ways, it is their education and experiences in American workplaces that fundamentally molds their emergent sense of group position within the American stratified system of belonging. Untangling the variety of factors that condition this complex portrait of intergroup relations and incorporation processes is a primary objective of this project. This project, then, is an ethnography of the intergroup relations, fundamentally conditioned by the social organization of labor, that shape the incorporation of Latina/o migrants, not just an ethnography of a meatpacking plant.

In the section that follows, I give the reader a brief description of the context that frames the demographic and economic restructuring of the American South around the turn of the twenty-first century. In particular, I discuss the burgeoning agroindustrial development that depended on drawing an abundant supply of labor supply to areas that had previously known little of international migration. I explain the significance of the site I selected for studying the social and economic incorporation of Latino/a migrants, in particular, through attention to their relationships with native-born groups in the important social domain of work. In the third section, I return to the encounter that opens this chapter, elaborating on its significance for understanding social relations between Latinos African Americans, the native-born group with whom they most overlap in the workplace. In the fourth section, I give readers a sense of the

analytical framework that informs this study, and introduce the concept of *prismatic engagement* which I propose to capture features of relations among subordinate groups encountering one another through the refractory lens of white dominance. In the fifth section, I lay out the state of current research on Latino/a migrant incorporation in the U.S. South and relations between Latinos and native-born groups, pointing to limitations in this research that I address throughout the chapters that follow.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING IN THE U.S. SOUTH

Researchers have documented the transformation of the U.S. South as a "new destination" for migrants, showing how a combination of factors, including the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, the subsequent militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, the increasingly adverse context of reception in traditional destinations, and the growing demand for less-skilled, low-wage labor partly resulting from the relocation to and concentration of certain industries in the region, have drawn millions of Latino migrants to the South (Massey, Durand, & Malone 2002; Zúñiga & Hernández-León 2005; Massey 2008; Hagan, Eschbach, & Rodriguez 2008). Although economic restructuring has devastated older industries in the South, notably textiles, new sources of economic investment have flocked to Southern states after cheap labor, new markets, and business-friendly policies. While manufacturing has declined steadily nationwide, the South has seen significant growth of the food processing, construction, and hospitality industries (Mohl 2005; Parrado and Kandel 2008; Hagan, Lowe, & Quingla 2011). Given these dramatic and ongoing transformations of the South, researchers have the opportunity to document the erosion of the historical racial binary between African Americans and whites and the development of an even more complex system of race relations, especially at the strategic site of the workplace, as newcomers become incorporated in Southern destinations.

At a time when large agroindustrial concerns were looking to consolidate their market control and expand production in new peripheries erstwhile beyond the reach of organized labor (Stuesse 2009; Mohl 2009; Brueggemann and Brown 2003; Fink 1998; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995; Andreas 1994; Broadway and Ward 1990), North Carolina proved to be fertile ground for growth (Griffith 2005). By most accounts, the 1990s were a nearly uninterrupted boom period for business. With the lowest unionization rate in the country, and right-to-work laws that were the icing on a big business-friendly cake, the 1990s saw the world's largest pork processing plant open its doors in a state that already hosted the world's largest turkey processing plant. The "total vertical integration" system pursued by the big packers means that companies increasingly control animal production and processing from pre-conception through slaughter. Between 1990 and 2004, one leading company expanded by 1,000 percent (Tietz 2006). This expansion is reflected in the growing centrality of animal production and food manufacturing to the North Carolina rural economy just as other industries, such as textiles and furniture manufacturing, were on a steep and irreversible decline. Yet, if agroindustrial development on such a large scale was going to succeed, capital would need to draw, secure, and promote a steady and growing supply of labor, to be sure, of the sort it had a preference for, labor that was most exploitable.

Thus commenced in the hog processing industry what had begun in the chicken, turkey, and hog farms and poultry processing industry up and down the Eastern seaboard in the late 1980s and early 1990s: a process of "ethnic succession" through which Latino/a migrants increasingly came to occupy positions previously filled by native-born blacks and whites.[3] In the

[3] In Chapter 2, I build on the work of Roger Waldinger (1996) and Laura Lopez-Sanders (2009) regarding the process of ethnic succession, showing how compositional shifts at Swine's have been conditioned by the legal and political environment dealing with unauthorized migration, industrial strategies pursued by packers to secure steady, super-exploitable labor, human resource policies that shrink or expand the eligible pool of labor, and migrant social

case of Swine's, the chief protagonists of this demographic restructuring were Hondurans (along with Mexicans and Salvadorans) and African Americans, though without a doubt the main architects of change were company Human Resources personnel. Little is known for certain about the conditions that framed the initial recruitment efforts that drew Hondurans to Swine's specifically, but the expanding agroindustrial sector lured an early wave of Honduran men to the area at the beginning of the 1990s. As the twenty-first century began, Latino/a migrants had established themselves as the stable majority of Swine's workforce. After 2000, women made up an increasing share of Honduran migrants, pushed by deteriorating economic opportunities following the devastation of Hurricane Mitch, but also drawn to reunite with spouses and family members whose planned temporary migration had become increasingly permanent (Pastoral Social/Caritas 2003). Of course, employment in the agroindustrial complex was abundant and easily attainable regardless of authorization status. But less than a decade later, dramatic shifts in the legal-political environment dealing with unauthorized migration lay bare the fragile position of this group in American workplaces and in the broader society. These economic, demographic, and political dynamics of change form the broader context within which incorporation processes take place, just as the prismatic engagement of groups configured at the level of the workplace and conditioned by the social organization of labor are critical to understanding how Latino/a migrants articulate their place in American workplaces and beyond.

These unprecedented transformations have spurred a large amount of scholarship on Latina/o migration and the New South. Much of this literature addresses one of two issues. On

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network mechanisms that ensured progressive succession. Ethnic succession at Swine's, I argue, was characterized by multiple mechanisms that are difficult to untangle. These consist of displacement of the incumbent African American majority with the purpose of quashing labor organizing through disproportionate and preferential hiring of Latino/a migrants given their share of the applicant pool, replacement of the incumbent African American majority through differential attrition, and replacement of the incumbent African American majority through the aforementioned hiring practices in the context of growth (i.e. the workforce at Swine's in 2009 was double what it had been in the early 1990s).

the one hand, researchers have been busy documenting the growth of the Latino/a population in nontraditional destinations, assessing the kinds of "challenges" that large-scale change of this sort pose for communities unaccustomed to dealing with immigration, and for the well-being of new Latino communities. On the other hand, researchers who study race relations, migrant incorporation, and work have viewed the phenomenal transformation of the region's demographic composition with some weariness, concerned at once about the prospects for Latino migrants' successful incorporation into the social and economic landscape of the U.S. South and about the competitive pressures they pose and potentially conflictive relations they portend vis-à-vis the region's African American working class. These twin concerns, and others, have been compiled in numerous edited volumes on Latino/a migration to nontraditional destinations, especially the U.S. South (Anrig, Wang, and McClain 2006; Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005; Arreola 2004; Sills 2011; Hill and Beaver 1998; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995; Gozdziak and Martin 2005; Hamamoto and Torres 1997; Jones 2008; Johnson-Webb 2003; Odem 2009; Murphy 2001; Mantero 2008; Massey 2008; Murphy, Blanchard and Hill 2008; Peacock, Watson, and Matthews 2005; Smith and Furuseth 2006; Gill 2010).

Recent research suggests that, while Latino migrants are "successfully" becoming a part of the Southern working class, African Americans facing a threat to their sense of group position resulting from socioeconomic competition react with an exclusionary posture towards Latino migrants. Latinos, surprised to experience substantial discrimination as "outsiders" from African Americans, report comparatively more positive interpersonal relations with whites. Compounded by racial hierarchies from origin countries, which devalue blackness despite their differences from the American racial order, and by a class structure in the U.S. South that places them in competitive conditions vis-à-vis African Americans rather than whites, some scholars see

mounting evidence in new destinations for an emerging black-nonblack racial divide in the U.S. (Marrow 2011; 2007; cite more). Researchers have taken notice of important factors to explain the nature of intergroup relations in a drastically transformed South. From these accounts, in turn, scholars have drawn implications regarding the eventual form that the incorporation of Latinos into American racial and class stratification systems will take. Missing from this growing body of research is attention to how *Latino/a migrants* themselves articulate boundaries vis-à-vis native-born groups with which they are meaningfully engaged in fundamental domains of life, a dynamic that critically shapes how they come to view their position as a group within the American stratified system of belonging.

Studies have looked at the opportunities for social mobility offered by different types of work in the South (Hagan et al 2011; Chavez, Mouw, & Hagan 2009; Marrow 2011; Striffler 2005; Kandel and Parrado 2004), but we do not understand how specific critical dimensions of work affect the boundary-making processes that shape intergroup relations and produce or reinforce groups' sense of their position. While several studies have looked at whether the particular industries being examined are declining, stagnant, or growing for purposes of hypothesizing about whether ethnic succession via replacement as opposed to displacement is occurring and, hence, whether social relations are expected to be rife with conflict or not (Skaggs et al 2000), or for purposes of ascertaining the potential for social mobility migrants may experience (Marrow 2011), I am not aware of studies that have taken account of actual structural and organizational features of work that shape the context for relations among workers. The dimensions I take account of are (1) the composition of labor and the authority structure in a workplace, (2) social perceptions about the nature of particular kinds of work and the ascribed qualities of particular types of workers, and (3) labor discipline regimes. Bringing features

prominent to the social organization of labor to the fore responds to the call of labor scholars to renew a focus on the work process (Juravic and Bronfenbrenner 2005), and fills an urgent need in the contemporary literature on Latino/a migrant incorporation and intergroup relations for in-depth studies of the crucial domain of work.

By selecting sites that vary across theoretically meaningful dimensions pertaining to the social organization of labor – in this case departments within the same hog processing plant with different racial/ethnic compositions – my research considers the possibility that the features and salience of ethnoracial boundaries, and of the symbolic resources by which they are expressed, created, maintained, and transformed in the context of dramatic demographic change in workplaces, are in part conditioned by the actual context within which social relations take place (Lamont and Molnar 2002). Further, by drawing a focus on the compositional structure of sites at the micro-level (i.e. departments in a single plant), I am able to build on pioneering work that shows that the relative size of groups is an important factor that explains patterns of intergroup relations in the contemporary U.S. South (Marrow 2011). A critical contribution of this study is that prolonged and deep immersion through participant observation makes it possible to simultaneously evaluate what Latina/os (and other groups) say about one another as well as how they behave. I follow the lead of both pioneering and recent scholarship that understands participant observation to be the most appropriate method for taking account of the many dimensions of work as a structure, process, and setting (Burawoy 1976; Fantasia 1988; Leidner 1993; Fink 1998; Striffler 2005; De Genova 2005; McDermott 2006; Lopez-Sanders 2009).

SITUATING INCORPORATION: ENCOUNTERS ON THE LINE

In the scene that opens this chapter I introduced six Latinas and African Americans I worked with regularly on a meatpacking line at Swine's. Now let me turn to an analysis of the

encounter that Friday morning, since these interactions hint at the themes that run throughout this book. That Friday morning on the rib trimming line, when Cristina scribbled the Honduran exchange rate onto the table in blood with the handle of her knife, her African American coworker Linda had exclaimed with astonishment "Oh I gotta go there!" Realizing Linda's confusion, misinterpreting the exchange rate to mean she earned a lot more in Honduras, Cristina shook her head and explained what a typical take-home pay was in dollars, around 40 dollars a week. Rosa chimed in that it was the same where she was from in El Salvador. "Oh no! That's why they come here. I would too!" Linda responded with outrage. An older African American worker, Thomas seemed curious, a shy smile on his face as he periodically looked up from the ribs he was cutting, glancing at Cristina with soft eyes: "Can they use dollars over there? Can they keep dollars in banks over there?" he asked. Linda was determined. "Elvia here, she pointed to Cristina using her real name, needs to start being real. Elvia needs to start being Elvia. So how much would it cost for her to get her papers?" she asked ingenuously. At a table nearby, a young African American worker named Vincent was trimming a different rib and looking over at us, provocatively pouting his lips behind his meat-smeared beard net. Claudia, a Salvadoran operator, was peeking under the wall where she worked at the machine sealing bagged meat, gauging the amount of bellies, shoulders, and ribs barreling down the line toward her. The day, cold and eternal, was like any other in the Loin Boning and Packing Department at Swine's. Michael, a freckle-faced African American floor supervisor paced frenetically from the boning lines to the packing lines, throwing his hands up, bellowing in frustration "Let's go, Boning, let's go!"

The scene portrays the kind of spontaneous interactions between Latina and African American workers laboring on the line and at tables that I observed over 16 months working

entry-level jobs at this meatpacking plant. That Friday morning, an unauthorized Honduran worker explained to African American co-workers through a combination of minimal English, pantomime, and basic math why people like her come to work in the U.S. The frankness with which Cristina approached this shop floor discussion was evident in other encounters with black workers where she found ways to make light of her unauthorized condition, pointing at the assumed name on her hard hat and announcing comically that she was not really Cristina, much to their amusement. The relative lack of knowledge, but also curiosity and even sympathy, of these black workers was evidenced in Linda's belief that Cristina's legal status problem was resolvable with money, and her conviction that Cristina should be able to live normally as her real self, Elvia.

The subtle significance captured in this encounter contrasts with the blunt, partial, and un-situated understandings conveyed in much of the interview data other researchers have relied on, and elucidates the enigmatic contradictions found in survey research. Such scholarship has attempted to describe and explain relations between immigrants and native-born groups, and examine their implications for the long-term incorporation of Latino/as into American systems of racialized stratification. But this scene is also a single snapshot. If I had observed just this one encounter, I might have been left with the impression that attempts at mutual understanding despite communication barriers characterize relations between Latinas and African Americans in Southern workplaces. This conclusion would accurately depict one interactional mode that prevails between Latina/o and African American workers, but it would misapprehend a major thrust of intergroup dynamics gleaned from hundreds of encounters, conversations, and comments I was privy to over nearly a year and a half.

Extrapolating a general conclusion about Latino-African American relations from this opening encounter would miss the fact that Cristina regularly referred to Thomas pejoratively as *el moyo*, a popular designation for African Americans, instead of by his name, and that she told black workers they were lazy to their face. It would miss the fact that nine years into working at this factory, Thomas didn't know what *moyo* meant until Vincent carefully explained it to him. It would miss Vincent's concern over whether Cristina was going to be "exported" following her arrest, and his muffled laughter at the idea that a raid would finally reveal everyone's real names. It would fail to recognize the verbal jostling between Rosa and Vincent, flinging accusations of laziness at each other that played on very different discursive materials, but often with similar comical tenor. It would neglect the explosive conflicts between Claudia and Lauren, her black female co-worker at the machine, and their unequal bargaining power with white male authority figures. Most importantly, it would ignore altogether the great sense of oppression felt by Latina/os who perceive that they are the most exploited and powerless workers and that African Americans are a privileged group at their expense. In short, it would oversimplify, and perhaps misrepresent, the major contours emerging from the *prismatic engagement* between Latinos/migrants and African Americans in the American South at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

A FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING INCORPORATION IN A TIME OF CHANGE

My research attempts to synthesize and extend several important but disconnected theoretical traditions in the field of ethnic and racial studies, applying these to the study of intergroup relations and Latino/a migrant incorporation in the contemporary South. Waldinger's (1996) "ethnic succession model," which builds on Thurow's (1975) queue model of labor markets and Lieberson's (1980) landmark study of the "new immigration" to New York City,

attempts to account for the motivation and persistence of discrimination by employers as well as the salience or relative absence of competition and conflict between workers in the context of workplace compositional change. Several studies have applied the general logic of the ethnic succession model to analyzing the impact of migrants on the composition of labor markets in the U.S. South and the quality of relations between African Americans and Latinos. Though conclusions about the extent to which Latino migrants displace or replace native-born whites and African Americans are not in any way definitive, studies have tended to interpret the evidence as supporting replacement (Griffith 1995; 2005 Skaggs, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Leiter 2000; Rosenfield and Tienda 1999; Kandel and Parrado 2004; but see Lopez-Sanders 2009 for a clear case of employer-initiated displacement).

While the ethnic succession model would *expect* little conflict in situations of replacement as opposed to displacement, few studies shed light on the *actual* character of social relations among groups encountering one another at work in the contemporary U.S. South at a time of massive demographic change. I build on research that shows how ethnic succession processes are shaped, not just by the preferences of employers and the social closure that migrant networks permit, but by the managerial policies and broader sociopolitical environment that enable or constrain these mechanisms. While the ethnic succession model is useful in explaining compositional change, especially of the large-scale aggregate sort, I argue it has limited utility for understanding the dynamic features of intergroup relations given its built-in assumptions. I view incorporation as a process conditioned by context through which groups struggle to define their place in a stratified system of belonging. In doing so, I retreat from the focus on outcomes in general, and the emphasis on competition-based conflict narrowly-construed in particular, that inheres in the ethnic succession model. Instead, I propose viewing relations among subordinate

groups as *prismatic engagement*, in which ongoing iterations and encounters in crucial life domains are patterned into an emergent sense of group position, whose social boundaries are expressed symbolically, and which is mediated by dominant groups who form the core of stratification systems.

Recent work has approached the question of social relations between Latino migrants and nonmigrant whites and African Americans by evaluating competing hypotheses relating to factors thought to give rise to intergroup conflict, with several important works advancing Blumer's (1958) "sense of group position" approach. Although Blumer's concept referred to the spatial (i.e. positional) relationship between dominant and subordinate groups, and the mechanism that produced dominant group prejudice toward subordinate groups (i.e. perceived threats to their position), scholars since have extended his group position approach to the study of intergroup relations and prejudice among subordinate groups (Bobo and Hutchings 1996) and within class-stratified contexts (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). While this approach has become popular, I argue that integrating the group position model with a "boundaries" approach which can account for the social relational processes tied to patterns of structural transformation, yields a more robust explanation of the intergroup relations that shape incorporation in the context of dramatic demographic, economic, and legal-political change in the South. Indeed, curiously, the way in which Blumer's conceptualization dovetails with one strand of literature that draws on Barth's (1969) view of ethnic groups as boundaries has not been acknowledged as far as I know.

Barth's work has inspired cultural sociologists interested in the study of social and symbolic boundaries. In his (1969: 10) critique of viewing ethnic groups as "culture-bearing units," he underlined a shift in focus from cultural *forms* to generative *processes* of ethnic boundary creation, maintenance, and change. Drawing on Barth's original analysis of boundary

formation and maintenance, and Bourdieu's (1984) advances in these areas, Lamont (2000; 1999; 1992) has established a strong research program in boundary processes or boundary work. This literature is concerned with how symbolic resources contribute to the creation, maintenance, contestation, and dissolution of institutionalized social differences (Lamont and Molnar 2002). According to Lamont and Molnar (2002), boundary-work in general consists of categorical schemes around perceptions of similarities and differences that groups use to identify who they are. In its analytical focus on *groups*, scholars who study boundary-work are more interested in "the *content* and *interpretive dimensions* of boundary-work than with intra-individual processes."

A number of scholars have examined the kinds of boundary-work through racialization that tie certain groups to certain jobs and to particular tasks within an occupation and exclude others from these, and analyzed what these associations suggest about relations among different groups of workers and between workers and bosses (De Genova 2005; Striffler 2005; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Wrigley 1999; Waters 1999). According to Nicholas De Genova (2005: 2), *racialization* refers to "the dynamic processes by which the meanings and distinctions attributed to "race" come to be *produced* and continually reproduced, and more important, are always entangled in social relations and conflicts, and thus retain an enduring significance because their specific forms and substantive meanings are eminently historical and mutable." Such distinctions take on both structural and symbolic manifestations, as the physical attributes, social meanings, and material inequalities that are inscribed in "race" situate groups in relation to one another in a constellation of positions (Omi and Winant 1994; Kim 1999; Haney Lopez 1996) within which whiteness retains a central, and I emphasize, prismatic role.

Though recently a number of scholars have turned to Blumer's (1958) "sense of group position" approach to explain how ethnic/racial groups view their own and other groups' location

in such a complex hierarchical map of intergroup relations (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Marrow 2007), attention to boundary processes sheds light on *how* and *why* such a map is produced and reproduced in different contexts and on *what* the specific social and symbolic markers in distinct regions of the map convey (Wimmer 2008; Loveman and Muñiz 2007; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Lamont and Molnar 2002; Loveman 1999). Lamont and Molnar (2002) call for studies of the *content* of, and *mechanisms* linked to, boundary-work that generates and mirrors social boundaries. In attending to the boundary formation processes tied to prismatic engagement between Latinos and African American workers in a Southern meatpacking plant, this research contributes to our understanding of the production of contemporary group-based inequalities.

INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND LATINO/A MIGRANT INCORPORATION IN THE U.S. SOUTH

Latino migration to nontraditional destinations has produced a wealth of volumes documenting the unprecedented transformation of the American heartland and bible belt regions (Anrig, Wang, and McClain 2006; Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005; Arreola 2004; Sills 2011; Hill and Beaver 1998; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995; Gozdziak and Martin 2005; Hamamoto and Torres 1997; Jones 2008; Johnson-Webb 2003; Odem 2009; Murphy 2001; Mantero 2008; Massey 2008; Murphy, Blanchard and Hill 2008; Holloway 2008; Peacock, Watson, and Matthews 2005; Smith and Furuseth 2006; Gill 2010). The vast majority of research on Latino/a migration to the U.S. South consists of case studies of particular localities, often painting a broad-strokes portrait of small-town demographic and economic restructuring that highlights the significant contribution Latino/a migrants have made to the agroindustrial labor force. This growing literature has addressed the “challenges” that such changes pose for places

with little recent historical experience with immigration, and reveals an undercurrent of concern over the de-stabilization of long-standing binary intergroup relations and the ongoing configuration of a new, more complex system of intergroup relations now featuring whites, African Americans, and Latinos. The concern over potentially conflictive relations between Latinos and African Americans, in particular, is based on the idea that while studies generally show the net economic benefits of immigration to the U.S. economy, labor migrants might compete with less educated, more disadvantaged native-born groups (Smith & Edmonston 1997).

With respect to the latter concern, a number of scholars have undertaken analyses of intergroup relations across a plethora of rural and urban Southern locales. To this point, most studies report cause for concern over the quality of relations between Latinos and African Americans. For example, Marrow (2011; 2007) interviewed over a hundred Latina/o migrants and native-born whites and African Americans in two North Carolina counties, across a variety of industries and institutional arenas. She finds that Latino migrants sense greater discrimination from African Americans than whites, and she explains this using a group position model, since African Americans are mostly at the bottom of the social class structure, while whites are generally split between working and middle class. She contends that African Americans, feeling a threat to their sense of group position, react in an exclusionary fashion towards Latinos. Further, this socioeconomic competition-based threat is exacerbated in areas with higher African American population levels, since Latinos feel most discriminated against by African Americans in the majority-African American county she studies. According to Marrow "Hispanic newcomers experience discrimination and exclusion not just along one vertical skin color axis along which white natives can mark them as racially inferior, but also along a separate horizontal (non)citizenship axis along which both white and black natives can mark and ostracize them as

undeserving civic and cultural "outsiders."" She says this axis is experienced most strongly by Latino migrants, and that blacks are seen as its "worst perpetrators" (30). Griffith (2005) and Striffler (2005) report similar findings from their interviews with Latinos in Arkansas and North Carolina. To Marrow, her findings shed light on the role of African Americans in excluding Latinos, and "helping to speed up Hispanic newcomers' incorporation into "mainstream" rural Southern society as "nonblacks" (2007: 30).

The problem with these studies, including Marrow's, is that they draw conclusions based on an incomplete picture of the dynamics that are at play. With respect to relations between African Americans and Latino/a migrants, scholars have tended to focus on one dimension of the relationship – African Americans' supposed attitudes and behavior towards Latino migrants. From this perspective, "conflict" is expected to stem from African Americans' feelings of the competitive threat posed by Latino migrants. But from an *incorporation* perspective, Latino/a migrants' understandings about African Americans take on an equal significance, and these understandings are likely tied to how Latino/as view their own group. From this perspective, socioeconomic competition per se may *not* be the operative factor driving the character of intergroup relations.

Critically, previous research, including Marrow's, relies almost exclusively on interview data, mostly with Latino migrants embedded in a variety of arenas. Although interview-based research conducted with Latinos may elicit information about the stereotypes or other sources for attitudes Latinos have towards blacks, such data is no substitute for observational data that captures the unprompted and spontaneous encounters between Latinos and African Americans in crucial and delimited contexts like work. Indeed, studies that have gone beyond largely assumptive claims about socioeconomic competition, and which have considered actual

workplace relations, suggest the significance of perceived disparities within the social organization of labor for conditioning relations between Latinos and African Americans in ways that foreshadow my argument (Stuesse 2009).

Further, while such interview-based research yields rich data on the perceptions of Latinos across a broad range of social situations about whether they experience discrimination and who they attribute this to, it is important to distinguish between a statement about Latinos' perceptions, whatever their actual experiences, and a statement about the fact of African Americans' role in essentially pushing Latinos' to embrace a position closer to whites. After all, the built-in incentives Latinos have – and were likely well aware of before arriving – to distance themselves from blacks or other highly stigmatized groups, and to identify with whites cannot be underestimated, and immigrant groups may "overlook" the slights and injustices perpetrated by dominant groups, while exaggerating those of others (see Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). Although some efforts have been made to give analytical attention to whites and whiteness in the study of Latino migrant incorporation in the South and the reconfiguration of racialized systems of stratification (see Marrow 2011, chapters 4 and 5), there is still a tendency to study intergroup relations dyadically. This is so because it is difficult to both conceptualize and operationalize the multiple configurations in which intergroup relations are actually organized. Unfortunately, this has obscured the powerful, if often intangible, intervention of whiteness, whose shadow is cast over the whole system of racialized stratification (DeGenova 2005; Kim 1999).

Indeed, my argument here is prefigured by the revisionist history of scholars who rebuild the incorporation experiences of earlier migrants from Europe, who moved from "racial in-betweenness" to unambiguous whiteness, not just because employers placed them at the front of the queue ahead of African Americans, but through the very real struggles among workers

themselves over jobs - "brutal, group-based competition" where it was widely known that black workers fared much worse than any other native-born group (Barrett and Roediger 1997: 18; Roediger 2005; Jacobson 1998). Although the basis of these struggles today may be different, and the eventual outcome of these struggles remains uncertain, the dynamics themselves are remarkably similar. I draw attention to the study of incorporation as an ongoing social process of prismatic engagement that involves both action and reaction on the part of Latino/a migrants *and* native-born groups, such as African Americans, with whom they are meaningfully engaged in the crucial setting, structure, and process of work. By also situating this analysis within the backdrop of a broader system of racialized stratification characterized by white dominance, I hope to contribute one piece to the still unresolved puzzle of who Latino/as are becoming.

Laboring alongside Latino/a and African American meatpacking workers and getting to know them outside the factory leave me certain that understanding how these groups encounter one another, and assessing what the character of these encounters suggests about how Latinos in the contemporary South are becoming incorporated into American racial/ethnic and class stratification systems, is a messy endeavor with surprising findings that are at once encouraging and deeply troubling. In marked contrast to the fears of some scholars and pundits, and against the conclusions put forth in recent research on the topic of intergroup relations in the U.S. South, African Americans working at Swine's do not talk or behave as if they are especially threatened by economic, political, or cultural competition from Latinos/migrants despite the fact that at least some of the necessary conditions are met, and this finding holds regardless of whether African Americans are the majority or minority in the department they work in.

On the other hand, Latinos/migrants deploy an elaborate array of racialized action that is substantially inflected negatively towards African Americans, that reflects and reinforces

ethnoracial boundaries between Latina/os and African Americans, appears to represent Latinos' determination to achieve incorporation as nonblacks, and may bolster the hegemony of whiteness in the emerging order. Yet, the qualitative range within and across distinct modes of action – how Latinos and African Americans talk about and behave towards the other – reveals contradictions and disjunctures that complicate any sweeping generalization based on the major tendencies I observed. It also serves as a reminder that in a context that demands prolonged physical proximity and collaboration, antagonism is likely to coexist with various forms of cooperation and even affection. Like Yanira, a young Dominican packer put it, "if you work with one person so closely, constantly, daily, hour after hour, 13-hour after 13-hour, you're going to get friends with that person one way or another, you're going to start fighting with that person, and then you're going to make friends again."

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Chapter Two addresses the broad social and economic contexts that in which Latina/o migration the American South has unfolded. I discuss the arrival stories of Latino/a migrants, focusing especially on the experiences of women and Central Americans, both of which have received less attention than their male and Mexican counterparts. In this chapter, I first delve into the social and economic contexts of origin communities that framed migrants' decisions to leave. I then discuss Latina migrants' labor market experiences in the U.S. that shaped their eventual insertion into the South's agroindustrial labor force. Following this, I examine the history of compositional change at Swine's, of which these Latina/o migrants are the chief protagonists, linking such changes to the broader sociopolitical and economic environment and to the labor relations context of Swine's from the 1970s to the present. I argue that compositional change or "ethnic succession" at Swine's can be attributed to a combination of replacement and

displacement dynamics in the context of growth in a burgeoning regional industry. Although competition perspectives embedded in theories that explain ethnic succession assume that replacement/displacement dynamics are configured in particular ways with the likelihood of intergroup conflict, I argue these frameworks offer limited utility for studying relations between Latinos and African Americans in the workplace.

In Chapter Three, I delve into the racialized language of the shop floor. In particular, I examine the symbolic boundaries Latino/a workers construct vis-à-vis their African American counterparts through such designations of the latter as "moyos." I trace the origins and usages of the term, locating it in a transnational field of ethnoracial meanings that reflects as well as produces negative boundaries with African Americans.

In Chapter Four, I link the strong symbolic boundaries that Latinos draw vis-à-vis African Americans to important social distinctions they perceive in the positions each group occupies within the workplace. That is, the strong and largely negatively valenced boundaries are intertwined with Latino/a workers' certainty that they are the most disadvantaged group at Swine's and that African Americans occupy a position of privilege. I expand the concept of "racial alienation," and challenge scholars' nearly exclusive preoccupation with competition as the source of intergroup conflict, to explain my findings.

Chapter Five delves in more depth into the source of Latino/a workers' grievances as the most oppressively exploited workers at Swine's. I argue that the vulnerabilities of "illegality," which objectively affect only migrants who lack work authorization, bleed onto the group as a whole – *hispanos* – for a variety of reasons. I further propose that, while unauthorized migrants' vulnerabilities stem from their "deportability," as other scholars have argued, in the workplace their vulnerabilities operate through the mechanism of "disposability."

In Chapter Six, I consider how the composition of the authority structure – African American, white, or Latino – mediates the dynamics I observed and described in the preceding chapters. In this chapter, I analyze the widespread perception among Latino/a workers that an African American-dominated authority structure magnifies the "privileged" position of African American workers.

In Chapter Seven I turn to an examination of African American workers' perspectives on Latinos and immigrants. This chapter is dedicated to explaining my findings regarding the weaker and less negative boundaries that African American workers draw vis-à-vis their Latino/a counterparts. These findings are surprising given the conclusions put forth in recent research that relies on competition perspectives and interviews with (mostly) Latinos, that African Americans display more exclusionary attitudes and behavior towards Latinos in the South than do whites. In combination with an expanded construct of "racial alienation," I propose that the concept of "linked fate" – the sense among members of a group that their individual fortunes are tied to those of the group as a whole – helps to account for the findings I put forth. Finally, I summarize my findings in my Conclusion, and advance the concept of prismatic engagement as particularly useful to studying relations among subordinate groups encountering one another in a "field of racial positions" characterized by white dominance.

CHAPTER 2

ALL ROADS LEAD FROM OLANCHO TO SWINE'S: THE MAKING OF A LATINO WORKING CLASS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

> I never imagined I'd end up here in this countryside breaking my back working a knife job. I'm from Honduras, from a place called San Nicolás de Copán. I was there until the age of 5, when I was taken to Cortés department. My mother left me in the care of my father, but he took me and a brother of mine to an orphanage because he was unable to care for us. I was there for 3 years, but I was lost without my father. He came to get me and my brother and we went to work with him on the streets, after the aunt that had been taking care of us died of cancer. I worked from the age of 11 and lived with my father until the age of 16. When I was 15, I started working at a Korean-owned factory. About 4 years later they made me a line supervisor. I went to live with my mother because it was closer to the factory. I worked there for 7 years. I met a guy and went to live with him in Olancho. We had two kids and he came over here [to North Carolina]. I stayed in Olancho for 4 years, doing housework and raising children, until Ernesto was able to send for me. He sent me money every month. He worked at Swine's.

Cristina's narrative is one of hundreds of thousands that tell the arrival story of the new working class in maturing destinations for Latino/a migration in the American South. Listening to these stories, sometimes I felt certain that little had changed from the time when Upton Sinclair (1906) recorded the despairing tales of Lithuanian immigrants that came to work in Chicago's packinghouses at the turn of the twentieth century. Cristina's mother, overwhelmed with other children and a new spouse, had left Cristina and one of her brothers in the care of her father when she was little, a period in her life she vividly remembers. For years, she and a

brother lived in Catholic and Evangelical children's homes because her father, a street vendor, was too poor to support them. By the time she was 12 and living with her father again, Cristina was working in restaurant kitchens and selling produce on street corners. She's never had a lot of friends, she raised herself, she says to me on several occasions, intimating at once her distance from and distrust of people and the unusualness of our budding friendship. She is enthralled by philosophical questions about the origins of life and the existence of God, finding my shop floor explanation of human evolutionary theory irreverent and entertaining. "You say we came from monkeys?!" she would exclaim in awe, calling others over to come hear my strange stories. I would learn some of the most important lessons from Cristina, both for understanding the questions about migrant incorporation and intergroup relations that I set out to research, and for appreciating the dogged perseverance of the human spirit in the face of crushing defeat.

> We embarked on the journey one night in June 2002, and arrived in Guatemala around 6 a.m. We stayed there for 3 days and exchanged money. To get to the border, we had ridden a bus, and we crossed into Guatemala via taxis. We stayed in "hotels." From there we went by bus to the border with Mexico. For 2 days we slept on the floor in the home of some *indígenas* in San Rafael. From there, we were moved in a small truck, which had a hole underneath it by the tires, and we entered through that hole, 19 of us lying in a line. At checkpoints, the police banged on the tires. We had been warned not to breathe. We traveled this way from about 4 a.m. arriving to Puebla around 6 p.m. We were there 2 days, and then two by two we purchased tickets for a bus to DF. We were in DF for 3 days at a house, and left on buses for Durango around 8 p.m. and arrived around 8 a.m. That same day we left for Chihuahua, close to the U.S. border, on a bus for another "hotel." We were there 1 day, and then we were all taken together towards the border. After another day, we were taken by truck and dropped off in the mountains to walk. We traveled on foot, walking for about 7 days. Leaving from Cananea near Agua Prieta, we crossed a mountain, descended, and crossed another on route to the desert and to Phoenix. We walked at night and rested during the day, until we arrived at a sierra, a few homes in the desert. Three vans arrived to pick us up. My shoes were shredded. The vans were small and people were crowded into them, so as we got out our feet were asleep, tingling. I came with my brother-in-law. In Phoenix, we showered and changed clothes. Another van came and took us to Los Angeles at around 1 a.m. There were 52 of us there, as our original group of 19 had joined up with others in the desert, and other migrants had

> already been waiting in this trailer for several days. Around 11 a.m., we were eating breakfast in the trailer home when masked gunmen arrived, holding us hostage until they received payment.

Cristina's story bore elements that were especially harrowing, though not unique to the stories of other migrants from Latin America. Her story revealed threads which were repeated in those of other migrants, especially women, who embarked on the migration journey with the hopes of earning enough money to provide for their families, sometimes joining spouses who had already settled in the U.S., and sometimes setting off on their own with the assistance of the transnational social networks in which they were embedded. Whether they came to reunite with spouses, like Cristina, or were drawn by pioneering relatives, like Cristina's husband Ernesto, all of their stories culminate at Swine's. At Swine's, just as in the broader agroindustrial complex of the American South, Latinos have been incorporated as the premier labor force since the turn of the twenty-first century, ensuring that these labor-intensive industries have an abundant, steady, and willing supply of hands.

This chapter frames the macro social and economic context in which this remarkable transformation of the South has taken place, preparing readers for understanding the meso-level intergroup relations between Latinos and African Americans I discuss in subsequent chapters. In the first section of this chapter, I describe general trends in Latino/a migration to new destinations and the more specific dynamics of Central American migration to the catchment area surround Swine's. Within this discussion, I draw special attention to the experiences of pioneer migrants and women as part of what some scholars refer to as the Latinization of the American South, and of the Southern agroindustrial complex in particular (Mohl 2003) I discuss both these migrants' reasons for leaving their communities of origin and their labor market experiences following their settlement in the U.S. After introducing the people in my study, I

then move on to the second section, in which I draw the reader into Swine's, the twenty-first century meatpacking plant in which this ethnography is set. In this section, I describe major features of the plant, including its composition, and portray the work day in the Loin Boning and Packing Department. In the third section, I trace the transformation of Swine's workforce from the early 1970s to the present. I highlight how struggles between capital's imperative to ensure an abundant and compliant workforce and episodes of resistance to labor subordination intersected with human resource policies and sociopolitical regimes dealing with unauthorized migration to engender the transformation of Swine's labor force from predominantly African American to predominantly Latino/a. In the final section, I consider the implications of the compositional dynamics at Swine's not only for bridging supply and demand-side accounts of migration, but for extending theories of "ethnic succession" in labor markets and their utility for explaining intergroup relations.

LATINO/A MIGRATION TRENDS IN NEW DESTINATIONS

Especially since the early 1990s, Latin American migrants have been drawn to nontraditional destinations in the Midwest and South, to cities, towns, and rural locales with little to no recollection of experience with Latino newcomers. In general, these new migrant streams are composed primarily of Mexicans, but particular areas have attracted significant numbers of Guatemalans, Hondurans, Salvadorans and other Central Americans as well as Haitian, Hmong, and Somali refugees. While migration of these latter groups has responded in some degree to recent political events or natural disasters in their countries of origin, Mexican migration to the

U.S. has a long history comprising several eras characterized especially by the shifting context of U.S. immigration law and its enforcement and demand for cheap labor.[4]

Several factors explain this new geography of Mexican migration to the U.S. The legalization programs of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) regularized the status of several million Mexicans. Many legalized migrants left traditional settlement areas in the Southwest and California and made their way East and South in search of new opportunity structures. The California recession and a rise in nativist hostility in the early to mid-1990s created inhospitable social, economic, and political conditions in traditional destinations and furthered this migration to new destinations (Light 2006).

Economic restructuring in the Southeast and the rise of manufacturing industries, construction, and meat processing drew Mexican migrants to the area as well (Mohl 2003). By 2000, 21% of Mexican immigrants in the country were living in nongateway states, and of those who arrived in the last 5 years (between 1995-2000), only 35% went to California compared to 63% of those who arrived between 1985-1990 (Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005: 13). Thus, both the diversity of destinations, and the percentage of Mexican immigrants located in new destinations has grown.

North Carolina is one of these new destinations. The Latino population in North Carolina grew dramatically between 1990 and 2004, increasing almost seven-fold by official U.S. Census counts from 76,726 to 506,206 and growing to at least 7 percent of the state's population (Kasarda and Johnson 2006). Mexican migrants have been settling in N.C. at least since the early

[4] Durand, Massey, and Capoferro (2005) refer to four key periods of Mexican migration to the U.S. The classic era preceded the 1920s restrictive immigration quotas, and Mexican migrants were concentrated in Texas (about 50% in 1920). There was some diversification in destinations (California especially, Chicago to a lesser extent) but the Great Depression halted this shift. The Bracero era of 1942-1964 made California a prominent destination, and by 1960 42% of Mexican immigrants lived in California, and about 6% in Illinois/Indiana. The undocumented era ran through the 1986 IRCA and marked the full ascent of California as the preeminent destination, with 57% Mexican migrants living in CA by 1990 (16).

1980s to work in agriculture. By the mid-1980s they had begun moving into poultry processing and meatpacking, and later construction, manufacturing, landscaping, and restaurant and hospitality trades (Griffith 2005). The reasons for this impressive growth are many but important factors contributing to migration during the late 1980s and early 1990s include the growth of food processing, construction, and furniture manufacturing industries, the increase in legal immigrants with knowledge of North Carolina serving as conduits to North Carolina jobs and the post-IRCA mobility attained by many migrants previously settled in traditional gateway states, growing links between labor contractors and *raiteros* (transporters, especially of agricultural workers) and greater overlap between agricultural and rural industrial labor markets (Griffith 2005; 1995; Mohl 2005; Kandel and Parrado 2004; Parrado and Kandel 2008; McClain, Alexander, and Jones 2008; Smith-Nonini 2003).

Of course, high Latino employment growth corresponded with this massive growth in the North Carolina Latino population (Kasarda and Johnson 2006). The Latino share of the workforce in the industries that are the focus of this study also grew dramatically over this period. Griffith (2005) notes that more poultry firms in N.C. were hiring Mexican migrants in 1990 than in 1988, and those that hired in 1988 hired more in 1990 (Griffith 1993), trends which continued through the 1990s (Striffler 2005), and which are apparent in the meat processing industry across new destinations beyond North Carolina (Parrado and Kandel 2008). Similarly, although their entry into the food service industry is more recent and their presence remains very uneven even among fast food establishments located next to each other, Latinos are making significant inroads in employment in this industry (fieldwork observations). Officially, the town of Perry, home to Swine's, is only slightly over 5 percent Hispanic while the county-level Hispanic population is greater than 15 percent, though both of these figures are surely

underestimated. At both the county and town levels, whites are a majority, though African Americans form a much larger minority in Perry at over 40 percent, and occupy a more intermediate position at the county level. In part because of the more similar class distributions of African Americans and Latinos – their greater likelihood of meeting in the workplace – and African Americans' spatial concentration in the downtown residential and commercial areas, Latinos sense a more significant presence of African Americans relative to whites in the area.

THE PIONEERS

Domingo is from southern Veracruz, Mexico, an agricultural and livestock raising area, where he labored on the fields ever since he was a child. In Veracruz, he had met a man who had regularized his status through IRCA and routinely traveled between the U.S. and Mexico, contracting workers to labor in the animal processing industry. This man recruited Domingo in 1992 in exchange for a $1,500 fee, and he arrived directly to the town of Fall River, North Carolina. There, he took up work at the Watts Farms turkey processing plant nearby. After working here for several years, he moved on to the Pig Corportation plant in Davis, where they were hiring unauthorized workers freely at the time. However, after about two years, he was fired when his papers "salieron malos" [turned out bad]. In 2000, he returned to Mexico thinking he would stay, but returned to the U.S. four years later in 2004. He had married a Mexican woman in North Carolina in 1995, but when the two returned to Mexico they "had problems" so they decided to return to North Carolina but still ended up settling. Upon returning, he and his wife took jobs at a Tasty Bird chicken processing plant in Fox Spring, North Carolina on the night shift. It was hard though, both of them on the third shift with three kids that needed caring for. Then he worked in construction for two or three years, and would keep their three kids when his wife went to work at Tasty Bird. At this point, construction work suffered a sharp decline, the company he had been working for went into bankruptcy, and he needed to look for work. His

search spanned the entire Southeastern region, and included applications at Fresh Birds in Linden, Holden Farms in Hensley, and Swine's in Perry, all processing plants. Swine's called first, and he began working there in 2009. He has 8 siblings and all have spent some time in North Carolina, but only a sister and two brothers remain. When Domingo worked at the Davis hog processing plant, organizers were reaching out to workers out in the parking lots. He was at the Watts Farms in October 1994, when the union won its second representation election, six years after the wildcat strike and representation election that followed it and that failed as a result of Faircloth's unfair labor practices. Perhaps if the New South ever came to reckon with its history, it would acknowledge its indebtedness to men like Domingo, who have worked for most of the last twenty years in North Carolina's burgeoning agroindustry.

With little doubt, Mexican men, like Domingo, blazed the trail to the American Southeast, but Central American men slowly became integrated into this migration circuit in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In North Carolina in 2010, there was approximately one foreign-born Central American migrant for every four Mexican migrants, and the statewide Central American population surpassed 80,000. Because the Central American population residing in North Carolina, comprised primarily of Hondurans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans, is concentrated in the multi-county catchment area that surrounds Swine's, their proportion of the Latino population relative to Mexicans in this area is substantially higher, especially when agricultural workers, who are predominantly Mexican, are excluded (ACS 2010).[5] In time, the Honduran

[5] I estimate that at Swine's, at least 50 percent of Latinos were Hondurans, 25-35 percent Mexican, 10 percent Salvadoran, and the rest other Central American, Caribbean, and South American. In Loin Boning and Packing Department, I estimate that 75 percent of the approximately 200 workers were Latino/a, and most of the rest were African Americans. Out of approximately 150 Latinos in this department, 50-60 percent were Honduran, 20-30 percent were Mexican, and about 7-10 percent were Salvadoran. The remainder included a handful of Dominicans, two or three Puerto Ricans, two or three Guatemalans, and one or two Nicaraguans.

presence would dominate among Latinos in this region of North Carolina, far outnumbering the Salvadorans in the area and even contesting the Mexican majority in certain workplaces.

In 1997, when Cristina's brother-in-law Heriberto went to apply for a job at Swine's, following several cousins who pioneered the early stage of Honduran migration to Clark County in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Human Resources manager asked him to list 9 nonconsecutive numbers off the top of his head. He could have a job under his own name if the number wasn't already on file for another employee. It was a time when work authorization requirements were lax and easily circumvented by Human Resources personnel and unauthorized migrants alike. Heriberto estimates that when he started to work on the cut floor, Latinos were already close to 70 per cent of the work force, but there was still a substantial minority of African Americans in this department. He is confident that at that time, Latinos were given preferential treatment in hiring, owing to both their larger share of the applicant pool and the disproportionate hiring of Latinos relative to others in the applicant pool, a process that he says paralleled the efforts of supervisors to speed up the disassembly lines. Because human resources personnel informally established separate application days for Spanish-speakers, the disproportionate hiring of Latinos might not have been immediately evident to all who applied. From the late 1990s onward, a Puerto Rican woman named Myrna functioned as assistant human resources manager and in combination with her Honduran husband, aided by the operation of migrant social networks, succeeded in recruiting a multi-status and heavily Honduran labor force. Those Latinos who obtained employment despite or because of the presentation of documents known to be false, showed their appreciation to Myrna with generous and humble gifts alike.

THEIR FEET IN THE DOOR AT SWINE'S, FORCES PUSH HONDURANS FURTHER IN ITS DIRECTION

As the saying doesn't go, company loves misery. Whoever said nature doesn't discriminate was wrong. If Mr. Samuels, founder of the Swine Packing Company, is one of nature's noblemen, as the late Jesse Helms once proclaimed, then nature is squarely on its noblemen's side. Hurricane Mitch brought a lot of misery to Honduras and parts of El Salvador. And the "lengthened shadow" of Nature's Nobleman – the Swine Packing Company – got plenty more Hondurans in return. Along with the entire Atlantic coast, Hurricane Mitch devastated the central and south zones of Honduras, leaving in its wake nearly 6,000 fatalities, 12,000 injured, 8,000 disappeared, 285,000 homeless. In addition to the severe flooding in all 18 departments, 60% of the transport infrastructure was damaged, a quarter of all educational facilities were destroyed, and 70% of crops were ruined (Secretaría de Salud de Honduras, date unknown). Records kept by Casas del Migrante, a hospitality house for journeying migrants, in Tecun Uman, Guatemala and Ocotepeque, Honduras show the enormous acceleration in Honduran out-migration following Mitch (Pastoral Social 2003). A 2006 study estimated the percentage of Honduran households that included an emigrant as 11.3 percent (Flores Fonseca 2008), perhaps reflecting the accelerated out-migration following Hurricane Mitch in 1998, and especially after 2000, when Honduras also suffered several droughts and declines in the price of coffee exports. The 2001 Honduras census estimated that at the national level, 3.34% of households included someone who had migrated internationally in the three preceding years, largely as a result of Hurricane Mitch.

Colón and Olancho, the two origin departments most prominent among Hondurans in North Carolina, were hard hit by the hurricane. They would become among the top five migrant-sending departments during this period, and 6.28% of households included someone who had migrated in between 1998 and 2001. Some *municipios* (municipalities) in Olancho, which had

not been directly affected seriously by Hurricane Mitch – like Santa María de Real, Silca, and San Francisco de Becerra – already had been strong migrant-sending areas before the hurricane. More than once, I heard Hondurans say that "all of" Silca was in North Carolina. If this was an exaggeration, it nonetheless reflected some grain of truth. By 2001, between ten and twenty-two percent of households in these *municipios* were estimated to include an international migrant (Flores Fonseca 2008). A study of migration and remittances in the four most prominent migrant-sending *municipios* in Olancho (Juticalpa, Catacamas, Santa María del Real and San Francisco Becerra) found that 28 percent of households included a current international migrant, and that more than half of these current migrants had left after 2000. Among the current resident population of these *municipios*, 11.4 percent (6,306 persons) had some international migration experience. Of those individuals with migration experience whose destination had been the U.S., 17 percent never made it past Mexico. While about two-thirds of "return migrants" stated their return was voluntary or planned, 30 percent admitted to having been deported.[6]

Many Hondurans in North Carolina come from Olancho, the largest department in the country – larger than the entire country of El Salvador, Honduras' neighbor to the southwest. It is an extremely rural zone that stands in the national imagination as a bastion of "the old ways" – like kindness to your fellow humans and the subordination of women to the will of men – and of lawlessness – Olancho is reportedly one of the most violent regions in a country that has close to

[6] Crucially, more than one third of households in the region (81,201 households) receive remittances, which average 3,470 lempiras or close to $200 a month (Flores Fonseca 2008 Olancho). This may seem like a small amount, but not when observed in the context of the country's extensive poverty. The GNI per capita in Honduras was $1,040 in 2004 (World Bank Indicators), making it one of the poorest countries in the Americas (Gindling and Terrell 2010). A striking contrast in basic levels of well-being between households that receive remittances and those that don't is that the former are substantially more likely to have electricity, running water, and access to sewage disposal systems. At the national level, remittances exceed the income generated by the maquiladora industry and make up 14 percent of total GDP of $7.4 billion (NDRC 2009), having nearly doubled between 2004 and 2007 from 1.3 billion to $2.56 billion (CEDOH 2005; U.S. Department of State 2009). In short, much as in Mexico and El Salvador, migrant remittances are a crucial source of economic sustenance in Honduras. Although Boston, Miami, New York, and St. Louis are considered important destinations for Honduran migrants, they have also formed enclaves in the rural Midwest and South.

the highest murder rate in the world (86/100,000 compared to 5 in the U.S.) (Pressly 2012; Frank 2012; Flores Fonseca 2008).[7] Along with the Afro-indigenous Garifuna, West Indians, and other Honduran workers from the interior, Olanchanos made up an important source of labor for banana companies along the North Coast in the twentieth century (Euraque 2003; Flores Fonseca 2008). Olancho, the Honduran department with the richest natural resources (Flores Fonseca 2008), has vast but dwindling pine and mahogany forests. Illegal logging operations flourish in the region, and if this wood ends up on the shelves and showrooms of E.U. and U.S. retailers like Home Depot, Macy's, and Babies 'R Us, communities like those in Salamá are left with dried up riverbeds that destroy local economic sustainability and perhaps add to population pressures. These communities' resistance to the barefaced theft of profits from the underground timber trade and the environmental devastation that accompanies it is met by violent repression from timber companies and the Honduran state itself (EIA 2005).[8]

In the longue dureé of global capitalism's maturation, Honduras has played a key role as a staging ground for U.S. hegemony in Latin America. First as the original "Banana Republic" resulting from the nearly 200 years of domination by U.S. fruit companies, then as the "Pentagon

[7] Unlike "the city," Cristina says, Olancho is the kind of place where people offer you food when you visit their homes even considering the little they may have for themselves. Olancho is the kind of place where a horde of men will chase you down and rape you if you turn them down, Adriana, another Honduran worker, retorts. I doubt either of these depictions is entirely true, but my worker-friends who described Olancho in these ways were perhaps conveying certain grains of truth about the place. Over a 24-hour period in January 2010 in this department with a population of less than 500,000, 16 people were found dead as a result of what is thought to be feuding between organized crime's powerful families in the region (La Prensa 2010).

[8] The pervasiveness of everyday violence from above and from below and how the two converge in the lives of Hondurans is captured by anthropologist Adrienne Pine (2008). There wasn't much that sounded appealing from the stories my worker-friends told me about their home towns. I hadn't even ever been there and I already wanted to leave. Ernesto is not like that, though. Cristina told me time and again how he had never hit her, and this was a remarkable accomplishment considering the ordinary violence displayed by the other men in his family and the control they exerted over their women. Julio won't even let his wife go anywhere without his permission, Cristina tells me about Ernesto's adopted brother, and the time she and Ernesto brought his wife to my house for dinner they had been sure to get Julio's blessing. Ernesto had even worked under her supervision at the Korean maquila in Choloma where she had worked since she was a teenager, Cristina tells me with glee. But he made sure she understood that even though she was his boss there, at home he was the boss. Still though, he had never hit her.

Republic" resulting from U.S. suppression of rebellious movements in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and other Central American countries, Honduras has been pillaged and puppeteered by the usurious hand of global capitalism (Euraque 1996; Chomsky 1985). Reflecting the recent times, Honduras has been referred to as a "Remittance Republic" (Pine 2008).

In addition to Olancho, many North Carolina Hondurans are from the department of Colón, along the Atlantic coast to the north which was devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Few people I worked with at Swine's identified as Garifuna, but Colón is home to the largest Garifuna populations in the diaspora. From the late 19th through much of the 20th century, Colón was ground zero for the banana plantation economy that made an empire of the United Fruit Company (Lainez and Meza 1973; Bourgois 2003). Since the latter 1900s Colón has also become an important site for production of African palms and the extraction of palm oil. As elsewhere, the expansion of African palm cultivation has intensified land pressures and led to conflicts between landless peasant families and the local corporate oligarchs who own much of the productive land along the North Coast (Malkin 2011). By the early twenty-first century, the North Coast of Honduras has also become a vital hub for the sale, transfer, and processing of cocaine destined for Mexico and U.S. markets (UNODC 2011).

MOLDING THE PREMIER AGROINDUSTRIAL LABOR FORCE: LATINAS AT SWINE'S

Far less is known about the experiences of Latina migrants than is known about the experiences of their male pioneer counterparts. For that reason, in the next section I devote attention to describing their decisions to migrate and to their work experiences before and after migration. While Latino men initiated the early phase of migration into new settlement areas in the U.S., women have become a substantial proportion of migrants especially since 2000. Critically, Latina women have become fully incorporated into the agroindustrial complex of the

American South, forming a vital share of the workforce in animal production and processing industries.

Many of the Latina/o migrants working at Swine's had been incorporated into the circuit of global capitalism well before they left Honduras, Mexico, or El Salvador, often employed in export agriculture in the North Coast or as maquiladora workers in Choloma, Cortés department. For most of them, the long and painstaking crossing through deserts, rivers, and mountains was but the latest in a series of uprootings, but by far the most costly in physical, emotional, and economic terms. Traversing three international borders spanning 3,000 miles usually took Honduran migrants close to a month and cost 6,000-8000 dollars, payment for a coyote (See also Sladkova 2010). In their re-telling of their migration story, I found it surprising how a number of women described making split-second decisions to leave, frequently as a result of some happenstance that made imminent exit possible. A few were trapped in abusive relationships and felt their only hope was to leave, an intimate sort of exile, which others studying Honduran migration have also documented (Schmalzbauer 2005). Like Mahler (1995) found among her Salvadoran respondents in Long Island, and Hagan (2008) found among her Mexican and Central American migrant respondents, most if not all of the workers I interviewed gave sobering accounts of their migrant experience, from the actual journey to their years living and working in the U.S. These were the ambivalent and battle-weary stories of fighters that have weathered suffering and disappointment but are still standing in the closing rounds. They assessed their lives in terms of modest gains achieved through almost unbearable sacrifice, not in terms of feeling upwardly mobile here or doing great compared to back there. These latter representations are the romanticized distortions of academics, who fetishize the migrant experience and equate agency with heroism.

Their usually lengthy and diverse work histories prepared them as much as possible for the First World exploitation they would be introduced to up north, and their experiences sometimes first in U.S. textiles firms, and then often in animal farms and poultry production, molded them into the premier agroindustrial labor force at the dawn of the twentieth-first century. In some sense, the trajectory of their work histories in the U.S. seems to slant upwards, from employment in declining industries or animal production farms to poultry processing to hog processing. Hog processing pays far more than work in other growing or stable industries, like poultry processing or animal production, or in declining or stable industries like textiles or canneries. And unlike the latter, hog processing is not seasonal work. And yet, casting this as "upward mobility" seems like a gross misrepresentation of their experience. The largest departments at Swine's, like Loin Boning and Packing, Cut Floor, and Kill Floor, have around 200 workers each, but only two or three crew leaders, one or two supervisors, and one superintendent each at most. Most workers will therefore never have a chance to move up in the authority structure. At best, some workers might obtain higher paying jobs within the department. A few men with mechanics skills might eventually obtain a transfer to the Maintenance Department, but this avenue is highly unlikely for most men, and all but closed off to women.

Like many Latinos who live in new destination states, some Latinas at Swine's had spent a number of years in traditional settlement s like Texas or California before settling in North Carolina. Such was the case for Carina and Leticia, sisters from Honduras who arrived in the U.S. before Hurricane Mitch and were subsequently able to obtain Temporary Protected Status.

> We are from the beautiful city of Sabá, in Colón. I worked in cosmetology, I had a beauty salon. Honduras is a poor country, and that's what makes us immigrate to this country. With the illusion of betterment, we think of coming for 2 or 3 years. We come here mistakenly believing that we will return soon. And once we get to this country we come

> to the grand realization that this is not the country of immediate betterment, like one thinks when they're in their country. I lived a peaceful life. I don't even know in what moment I decided to come here. I think if I were there I would be better off than I am here. I came here because a friend of my sister's [Leticia's] arrived to pick her up [to migrate], and she didn't have the courage to leave, so she said to me "You go" and I did. This friend I went with was pregnant, and we got nabbed [by authorities] three times. A fourth time I was deported once already in California. But I persisted, thinking I was already here, I had to continue. My sister was younger. She didn't have the courage to come. It was 1993, and I was about 24 years old.
>
> I got to California, where I stayed with some pastor friends. I was there almost two years, and then I moved to New York, Florida, Colorado, and back to California. When I would be out of work, I would move looking to improve life for me and my son. When I first got here, I worked at a Victoria's Secret factory, then at a beauty salon, in Colorado I did housekeeping in resort towns, in New York I worked in housekeeping at a Marriott. I moved to North Carolina after Leticia married and moved here. I've been working at Swine's for 2 years.

Carina's sister Leticia, initially scared to go through with her migration plans, later followed her sister – and two brothers already in Florida – to the U.S with a cousin. She arrived in Houston, and worked for much of the next ten years as a nanny, before moving to North Carolina when she got married in 2008. Before her international migration journey, Leticia had already migrated internally to an export processing zone for work. Unlike Cristina, Leticia says "Ever since I could think, I dreamed of coming over here. I dreamed of being on the beaches in Miami." Of course, now that she is here, she recalls this fancy with irony.

> I left Colón to work in Cortés department, in the *maquilas*, which are clothing factories. They made Levis. That's what I worked in, a factory for export to the U.S. There are many in Choloma. I went with a cousin. There I had the experience of working among many people and of seeing what a factory was like. I inspected the dress pants that Levis brings over here. The salary was an equivalent of $50 per week. Only that there they don't mistreat you like they do here as an *hispano*. Because there is betterment here, but there is also a lot of discrimination in terms of races. We *hispanos* are often treated – especially in the company we are working for, Swine's – we are treated very poorly.

For other women, an initial period of residence in traditional gateway states was relatively brief, after which better job opportunities and lower costs of living, along with expanding social

networks, pulled them toward North Carolina. This was the case for Leslie, a woman who exudes a kind grandmotherly aura beyond her actual age or temperament. She is from the town of Ilanga, in Colón, Honduras, and is among the Latina/o migrants at Swine's with the longest tenure in the U.S. Like Leticia and Cristina, her labor market experiences span the global production regime characteristic of late capitalism, culminating with her insertion into the agroindustrial labor market of North Carolina.

> My husband came to Houston in 1991, and I came three years later. I worked in garment factories, since I already knew how to sew, having studied it in Honduras. We moved to North Carolina, and I worked at Textile Inc. in Kerr Hill for a year at $4.50 an hour. Then I worked in Boyd at a pickle plant. But that was paid by production. And since it was seasonal, in October or November they lay you off. Then I worked at another garment factory in Linden for about eight months. Then I became pregnant, and after having my son I returned to the pickle plant, since around May they start hiring again. Then I worked at Hansen Farms with turkeys. They bring the eggs from the farms, clean them with a machine. Low paid too, it was like $6.00 an hour but I worked a lot of hours, like 10 hours. Then around 1999-2000 I applied to work with hogs at Hansen Farms, since it pays a little more. I cared for the little hogs for seven months, fed them, gave them medications when they were sick, helped the sows give birth.

But most of the people I got to know at Swine's – especially the Hondurans – embarked on their journey with North Carolina as their destination, either to reunite with husbands who had already migrated, like Cristina, or as single women who usually had siblings or other family members here (Massey et al 1987). Luz is from Comayagua and has been in North Carolina for eight years. She left behind four children, and the pain of separation was almost unbearable at first. Her children are grown up by now, and they have no intention to travel to El Norte, unless they got papers one day. It has become way too dangerous, and besides she is thinking of going back soon. If she ever returned to Honduras, she swears she would never come back here. Although it is *bonito* over here, you live in a cage of gold, she tells me, paraphrasing a song by Los Tigres del Norte. "The police is always bothering us." Scholars studying Latino/a migrant

incorporation in other new destinations have also documented migrants' increasing sense of social isolation in the current sociopolitical climate hostile to unauthorized migrants, their feelings of being trapped in a gilded cage (Schultz 2008).

Luz studied cosmetology in Honduras, but never had enough money to open a business, so she worked as a waitress. She never made enough money to support her kids and send them to school though, so she decided to leave. Upon her arrival in Phoenix, she immediately headed for Perry, where her sister has been living for 16 years, and also works at Swine's. I mulled over Luz's analogy of the cage of gold, and remembered the situation of Olga, another Honduran woman who worked at Swine's bagging loins and bellies. Olga's teenage daughters, whom she left behind in Honduras, don't want her to come back. When I asked her why – "Don't they miss you?" – she grazed her thumb against the inside of her index and middle fingers, the expression on her face disturbingly flat. *Money*. Cristina's son, whom they affectionately call Bubu, vowed to grow out his hair until he saw his father again. It has been 13 years now, and the tiny boy's scraggly hair flows down his chest. I found the stoic resolve in these mothers searing, even unsettling. The steely composure of mothers in the face of the painful decisions they made to separate from family, especially their children, and the heartbreaking consequences their departure frequently had for those left behind, have been captured poignantly by others (Nazario 2006; Schmalzbauer 2005, Menjívar and Abrego 2009).

Some women had wished to continue their education in Honduras, but unable to afford it had moved into the labor force. Under other conditions, they might have remained part of Honduras' white-collar working class. While they were usually able to find work, their pay was

meager,[9] and some women refused to submit to the sexual exploitation that was expected of them. Such was the case for Reina. Her brothers already resided in North Carolina and had TPS, but it was only when an aunt came by her house before departing for El Norte to bid her farewell that Reina decided in that moment to leave with her.

> I'm from the coast of Colón, Honduras. I had been studying to be a secretary, and wanted to go to university but didn't have money to keep studying. I found work but it paid very little. That's why I had to come here. You can find work but sometimes only through political connections. And sometimes the politicians offer you a job but they want you to give what you shouldn't have to give in order to get the job [sexual favors]. That's why sometimes you decide it's better to come here. There's a lot of corruption and they want to take advantage of young people in return for a job, which is why many young people prefer to come here. So I worked briefly, but it didn't pay well. And they were going to get me a government job but, like I said, they want you to pay them with something else, to sleep with them. I'm not used to that. I preferred to come here, and not pay them with what they want. I came in 2001. It hadn't occurred to me to come here. I had been working, and being single one can make it. But an aunt of mine was coming, and she was saying goodbye to me and told me to leave with her. I hadn't thought about coming here, but since I already had two brothers here, I asked if they would help me pay for the coyote and they said yes. So it was all of a sudden. It wasn't planned. One of my brothers worked in sanitation at Swine's, and a friend of his who had been his coyote brought me. It only took us 15 days. It was very hard. Because sometimes you come venturing through all of Guatemala and Mexico. The crossings are hardest in Mexico because there sometimes they just dump you in the hills. I hear it used to be easier, but not anymore. My advantage was that the coyote was a relative, so he protected me. When he had to send a group walking through the *monte*, he would send me separately by car. Other parts we traveled by truck, crawling through a hole beneath it and laying one on top of the other. Since I was family, they took care of me and that's why I didn't suffer a lot. From

[9] This was the case for Ileana, Cristina's in-law. Ileana is from Potrerillos, in the department of Cortés on the North Coast. Mitch destroyed banana plantations there belonging to the Tela Railroad Company. There is also sugar cane, but only men work there, she tells me.

> "The *maquilas* began arriving – the *chinos* who went to Honduras – in Villa Nueva [but she did not work in factories]. I was like a secretary to a *diputado* for Cortés department. When my kids were entering the regular school, I decided to come because I didn't earn enough to put them through all that. Now my daughter is in university and the others are still in school. I've been here three years. Someone told me they would help me get here. It costs a lot of money. I earned enough to feed us, but no more. I earned 100 lempiras a day [$5.50]. Someone told me they could send me $50 dollars a month, or they could bring me. I came with the help of a couple I knew, and arrived in Virginia. I wanted to work quickly, because my kids would call me and ask me to send them money. So I had my brother here. And he said come."

> Mexico, some of the groups crossed into the U.S. either by river or desert. At the time I came, there was the advantage that when you passed through immigration they gave you "permission." So I passed with a little girl, pretending that she was my niece. Because when you came with minors, they gave you permission to enter for like 10 days, and then you had to present to court, but since you're scared to you don't show up. I went by bus to San Antonio and my brother sent for me.

Within four months of her arrival, Reina began working at a North Carolina chicken processing plant, where her relatives were employed at the time.

> I worked at a chicken processing plant [pollera] in Hensley for almost 4 years. That was my first job here. My sister-in-law worked there, and she and my brother have TPS. She told me that they hire people there with a different name. So I got papers. When you come here you don't know about any of that. You come here thinking you will work with your name just like in Honduras. You arrive ignorant of all that. But once you get here you are disabused of such ignorance. If you don't have papers, you have to work with other identities. So they got me papers, and I worked at Holden Farms. My sister-in-law left the job, and since I didn't have a driver's license, I decided to leave it and come work here, when it was Hog Ventures Inc. I got other papers to come work here. Because at Hensley Farms they don't ask for ID or any of that, just a social security number and name. Not here, here they ask for ID, birth certificate. Over there, they just want to make sure it's a real number, they're more crooked. Here your papers have to be more correct. Now it's gotten much harder, now only papers that are correct, they check the papers. When I first got a job here, I had to stand in line all night to apply, and I had to do that two times before I got a slot. I worked for two years, bagging Japanese loins. It's really hard, and you're beat by the end of the day. I left the job to have my daughter, and came back to work five months later. They hired me back because Josué [her husband, who works on the boning line] spoke to Myrna, whom he gets along with, and because George [the superintendent of Loin Boning and Packing department] knew me and agreed to take me back.

Around 2000, Honduran women began arriving to North Carolina in greater numbers, reflecting diminished employment prospects in Honduras following the devastation of Hurricane Mitch and male partners' transition from being temporary to semi-permanent migrants, along with the more general trend toward diversification of Latino/a migrant destinations (Pastoral Social 2003). For many Hondurans (and Salvadorans), the extension of Temporary Protected Status following Hurricane Mitch in 1998 further eroded the fixed time frame migrants had

initially proposed to themselves, even as it represents at best a “liminal legality” rather than an avenue to permanent residency (Menjívar 2006; Coutin 2003). As Heriberto explains it, many men like him arrived in the mid- to late-1990s with the intention of working, saving, sending money home, and returning to Honduras in two years, a short-term orientation shared by most labor migrants. Network members who had successfully migrated committed to informally sponsoring another family member, and in this way five of Ernesto and Heriberto’s other brothers have also spent time in North Carolina. As the two-year time frame elapsed, anxious men began to send for their spouses, initially with the idea that an additional earner would speed up their return to Honduras.

Women then became integrated into the chain migration network, increasing female migration by sponsoring sisters, cousins, and friends (Hagan 1998). Because they found plentiful employment opportunities in the animal farms and processing plants, women could be full members of the network, paying back family members who had fronted the fee for their journey. As the years passed, some of these women who had left children behind with parents or in-laws sent for them as well. Later, as the undocumented journey became more perilous, securing employment more difficult, U.S. costs of living rose, citizen children were born, families became reliant on remittances, and some people secured work authorization indefinitely, migrants’ horizons for returning became less clear or disappeared altogether (Pastoral Social 2003). By 2009, women made up somewhere close to half of the workers in the Cut Floor and Loin Boning and Packing departments, and an even higher share in departments like Bacon Slice and Microwavery. In this next section, I bring the reader into the world of Swine’s, a world that quite literally consumes the lives of its workers.

THE HEART OF HOG COUNTRY, THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Perry, North Carolina is the seat of Clark County in North Carolina. This region is the heart of hog country, where three of the top five hog producers in the United States own or contract with over 1,800 farms throughout the state. It is a key region for Pig Corporation, a vertically-integrated company that is both the world's largest producer of hogs and the world's largest processor of pork, single-handedly controlling 72 percent of the slaughter capacity in the South Atlantic region. According to the North Carolina Employment Security Commission (citation), agricultural production, animal production, and food manufacturing accounted for over 30 percent of the average annual private industry employment in the county in 2009, up from 20.5 percent in 1990. In nearby Garnett County, food manufacturing by itself accounted for close to 30 percent of all private industry employment in 2009, and almost one of every two private industry jobs were in agricultural production, animal production, and food manufacturing combined. Indeed, several hundred yards from any road in this multi-county region on either side and surrounded by fields of corn or tobacco, you will see clusters of simple silver or blue rectangular structures that crowd hogs, turkeys, or chickens. At any given hog farm, a handful of workers are employed to tend to hogs individually, feeding the animals and cleaning their enclosures, giving injections, snipping testicles, and helping sows deliver their piglets. Many meatpacking workers have worked at these farms and speak affectionately of their porcine charges, recalling cradling them like babies, or sorrowfully, recalling their aversion to performing the cruel tasks required of them.

Inside Swine's, a Twenty-First Century Meatpacking Plant

On what is now the main road into town but was once a cow pasture, flanked by a large pawn shop prominently advertising GUNS and a McDonald's, is Swine's. You can smell Swine's before you see it. Started out in 1950 as a small family-owned slaughterhouse, Swine's grew to 6,000 daily kill capacity by 2000, when it was sold to Hog Ventures, which expanded the

facility by adding a new cut floor and redesigning the kill floor to slaughter hogs using CO2 gas chambers, raising daily slaughter capacity to 8,500. In 2006, Pig Corporation acquired Hog Ventures and with it Swine's, and the plant now slaughters and processes 10,500 hogs a day, employing between 1,200-1,500 workers, more than double the number of workers employed by the factory in 1974, and about 30 percent more than were employed in the mid-1990s. Throughout the 1990s, when Swine's workforce nearly doubled, the Latino share grew to be the majority among workers. By way of comparison, the largest hog processing plant in the world slaughters an average of 28,000 hogs a day and employs 3,500 people, so Swine's is a very respectably sized operation.

Swine's is a full-scale production facility, from slaughter to further processing of case ready pork and pre-cooked products, with a significant share of fresh pork product for export to China and Japan. Departments central to the basic production process are the Kill Floor, Cut Floor, Loin Boning, Belly Conversion, and Hamboning departments, and further processing includes the Smokehouse, Bacon Slice, Dry Salt, Pork Chop, Microwavery, and Marination departments. Different smells emanate from these departments – pure shit on the kill floor, peppercorn or garlic and herb in Marination, a sweet smoky scent around Bacon Slice. Sometimes the overwhelming smell is neither the slightly pungent scent of cold blood and fresh meat nor the foul warm pestilence of feces but rather the dizzying and taste bud-saturating bleach-like odor of the chemicals used to clean and sanitize the lines every night. The further processing and Hamboning departments work in two shifts, with the second shift in departments like Dry Salt and Microwavery periodically shut down according to swings in projected demand. Basic production departments work in one shift that begins at 6:00 a.m. and, in the case of the Loin Boning department, can extend until 9:00 p.m. or later. As such, where one side of the plant

– further processing departments – is characterized by instability and even insufficient hours, the other side of the plant – core production departments – is characterized by an unwavering excess of hours. Indeed, the departments and shifts that make up Swine's combine a patchwork of precarity and rewards that make it difficult to define with any certainty the "good" and "bad" jobs (Kalleberg 2011).

Although I lack precise figures, a certain level of segregation was evident within the plant across departments when I worked there between August 2009 and December 2010, with African Americans concentrated in further processing departments and in p.m. shifts, and Latinos representing a preponderant majority in the central production departments, especially in the Loin Boning department.[10] In core production departments like Kill Floor, Cut Floor, and Loin

[10] The reader may be interested to know how I came to be employee # at Swine's. On a balmy Sunday night in July 2009, I got in line outside the gates of the hog processing plant in Perry. The week before, I had driven up to a worker in the parking lot and asked how to go about applying for a job here. The worker, an older African American woman I later recognized as a Quality Assurance employee named Janine, told me to go to the unemployment office and fill out an application. "Is that how you got hired?" I asked naively. "No, but I've been working here for 18 years!" The next morning, I had arrived at the local ESC office but was told they were taking applications directly at the plant. An older black woman and I made our way to the factory, where the guard at the gate told us we were too late to apply. He instructed us to show up at night and wait for a security guard to hand out numbers at 4:00 am to the first twenty people in line so we could come back later that morning to fill out a applications for production jobs at the plant. As we walked back to our cars, the woman protested she wasn't going to do all that; she would get here at 7:00 am. I told her she wouldn't make the cut, if what the guard told us was true. "We'll see then." I would later come to know this woman as Ms. Angie, a no-nonsense kind of woman who enjoyed sipping on a few "Buttweisers," which she also referred to as "Clydesdales," after getting off work in the Marination department.

I returned to the plant that same night, but by the time I arrived there were already 22 people in line ahead of me. I waited, hoping I would get a number anyway. There appeared to be an equal number of black and Latino men applying (5-8 and 6-8) and 4 Latinas, at least two of whom I guessed were second generation. Some weeks later, I learned that two of the Latinas, who were bilingual and in their early twenties, had failed the drug test and were not hired. I learned this when I ran into the two friends at WalMart and they recognized me, but not as the woman who had lent them jumper cables to start their friend's car but as the woman who had sold them a "drink" that "didn't work" and so "they found the marijuana." Close to 4:00 a.m., the security guard came out to the gate and handed out numbers to the first 20 people in line, and much to my disappointment told the rest of us we would have to come earlier next time.

So that Sunday night I arrived earlier, and there were only around 13 people in line. On this night most of the people standing in line were African American men and a few women, along with two white (or Indian) young men, and two Latinos (one man and one woman). I bring coffee, a bottle of water, and a magazine and squat against the chain-

link fence. A black man and woman at the front of the line have removed a seat from their car, brought a red blanket for the woman to wrap herself in, and a rolling desk chair for the man to sit in. An old black man has brought a crossword-type magazine and a cushion to rest against. I chatted with Germán, who is Honduran, and Isabel, who is from Michoacán, to pass the time. It turned out Germán had worked here in 1996 and was returning to see if they'd hire him despite his "bad record" (getting fired for fighting) and despite being told in 2002 he would not be rehired. Isabel and her husband, who had moved their family from California to North Carolina to escape the high cost of living, both worked at this company's plant in Davis, N.C. but that facility has been in the process of shutting down. Her husband followed the company here while she picked up a job at a textile factory. We talk about which are the bad jobs here – pulling out intestines, sticking the pigs to bleed them. Around midnight, trucks start delivering hogs for the 6:00 a.m. slaughter. Each time a truck passes by, everyone in line pauses to watch, and someone makes a comment about the hogs' fate, usually in dry humor. Isabel exclaims "Poor little pigs. But the carnitas are so tasty! And then "Poor things, the little pigs. It's their last night!" And finally, "Poor things, the little pigs. We'll all have to become vegetarians so they don't get slaughtered!"

Isabel's commentary extends to the African Americans in line in front of us, and later behind us, or about blacks in general. As we discuss our experiences trying to apply thus far, and affirm our belief that the company is hiring a lot right now, Isabel explains "Es que éstos no duran. Se quedan uno o dos días y ya. No aguantan. Huevones que son" [It's that these people don't last. They stay one or two days and that's it. They can't take it. Lazy-asses that they are]. A short time later, she makes a similar remark, saying "Son flojos" [They're lazy]. When I ask who, she says "los morenos." She maligns the work ethic of "éstos" [these people] adding that "Piden de todo. Estampillas, welfare, housing. Todo quieren que se lo den" [They ask for everything. Food stamps, welfare, housing. They want everything handed to them]. She is baffled that so many are getting hired. She mentions that there were purges at the Davis plant of workers whose social security numbers did not match, and suggests that more blacks came in to work then. I am astonished at her casual remarks as we sit and stand shoulder to shoulder with African Americans in line. Though I voiced no agreement or disagreement, I casually nodded along to her remarks. Although I was initially quite surprised and uncomfortable at the brazenness with which Isabel made such comments about African Americans, this experience would be just the first of many like it.

On this Sunday, the guard emerged as dawn approached and handed out numbers to those of us in line. I returned to the plant at 9:00 am to fill out the application, and I was interviewed by the "recruiter," a woman I already knew was Puerto Rican thanks to Isabel. I go into the back office with Myrna and she looks over my application quickly, asking next to nothing about my work experience or education. She asks where in Puerto Rico I'm from, and I ask her if she is from there (her parents are from Vieques). When something about my knowing English comes up, she attributes this to schooling in Puerto Rico, and I add that at home we spoke both. She gets a checklist and starts reading off questions including "Are you afraid of working with knives? Would you have a problem working in hot or cold environments? Is this a long-term or short-term job for you? Why do you want to work for us? Why should we hire you? Do you prefer to work in hot or cold? Do you prefer first or second shift?" To all, I answer "correctly." I am a hard worker, responsible, learn quickly, motivated, committed, and bilingual. It's a good paying job. Long-term, I mean at least a year. Either shift; if I have the option, night shift. Cold. Myrna gives me a form – it is a conditional offer of employment to work in a new department (Marination), starting Monday, August 3 with an orientation (she says it used to be 2 days but is now 1) on Friday, July 31. She gives me an appointment note to come back at 1:00 pm for my drug test and physical and some medical forms to fill out. Carla, a Honduran woman in her late 30s is waiting to speak with Myrna before starting her shift in the Pork Chop department. She tells me she started 3 weeks ago, and she can't understand why they assigned her to work in this department, where it is mostly *morenas*, and she is practically the only *hispana*. I never imagined it would be so easy for me to get hired. I walk out

Boning, Latinos made up between 65 and 80 percent of the workforce, and in further processing departments like Marination, these figures were reversed, with African Americans making up the majority of workers. Working conditions ranged from difficult and uncomfortable in certain departments, and insecure if the department was working less than 40 hours a week, to brutal and despairing in other departments, and unbearable if the department was working 75 hours a week. Indeed, the Marination department on the p.m. shift where I worked for the first seven months resembled the first set of conditions – it was "the supermarket" of the factory, as one black worker had referred to it. The Loin Boning department, where I worked for the last nine months of my fieldwork resembled the second set of conditions – it was "the real world," as the black department superintendent had referred to it when I went to talk to him about my desire to transfer into that department. Here, working conditions were so severe that one Honduran worker I consulted about my impending transfer told me I would "regret life," and upon experiencing the conditions first-hand I felt they could only be described as wage slavery. In fact, despite the relative difference in working conditions between Marination and Loin Boning, in both departments some workers – African American *and* Latino – referred to being treated like slaves. Still, I came to understand that once workers crossed an uncertain threshold and realized they could survive whether in "the supermarket" or in "the real world," some could also find pride and joy in their work, and at times humor, especially of a sexual nature, could bridge boundaries and make working downright fun.

LIFE WORKING ON THE LINE

The hog is the hero of Clark County, Cristina's brother-in-law Heriberto concludes, the raw material responsible for the area's economic development over the last twenty years. The

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stunned, knowing this would be one hell of an experience. A few days later, the plant human resources manager tells those of us new hires who had arrived for Orientation on time at 8:00 am: "You will be the successful ones."

town of Perry pays homage to its local hero in dozens of colorfully decorated sculptures of the beast that adorn store fronts and public buildings throughout the historic downtown. The hog may be the hero of Clark County, but 'el hispano' was the human engine that in the 1990s put in motion rural growth through agroindustrial development anchored in cash crop production, animal farming, and processing plants. At Swine's, cynical workers echo their perception of the relative worth of hogs and humans for the company and for government inspectors. From time to time, an aggrieved worker will remark bitterly about how "they" care more about the *marranos* or hogs than about "us." When production on the kill floor is shut down for hours because a hog was trampled by others on its death walk, workers can't help feeling bitter. After all, the animal was slated for slaughter – who would stop production for hours if a worker were injured, except for the time it took to sanitize the lines? Even when Giovanni, who sorts and bags riblets, lost his son Milton, a boning line worker, in a terrible car accident, few who wanted to attend his evening funeral service were allowed to leave work without penalty. Production was not suspended after a maintenance worker suffocated to death on methane fumes as he filled a waste water tank with hog sludge. Production didn't even cease after a kill floor supervisor dropped dead in the middle of the work day, probably from a heart attack. The mission of production is a stampede of bulls that in the last instance does not recognize such status distinctions. Supervisors make it clear to workers that production is not to be interrupted by such human needs as going to the bathroom. In fact, supervisors threaten to replace workers with others who will submit entirely to their labor discipline in the service of ceaseless production.

It was 8:00 at night in mid-April 2010, when our African American floor supervisor Michael called packing workers to huddle around the staircase leading up to the supervisors' office for an impromptu and ill-timed threat session. We were *14 hours* into our shift, which had

begun before sunrise and would end well past night fall. Only a month into my transfer to the Loin Boning and Packing Department from the Marination Department, six of my fingers had already gone numb from the incessant clenching and shaking associated with bagging heavy loins into torturously small bags over such a long work day. The discomfort and desperation caused by numbness and tingling in my fingers, which would last for several months, was matched by the most intense pain and tenderness in my hand muscles which made it nearly impossible to turn my bedroom door knob in the mornings and by sharp back pain that soured my spirit. But at least my fingernails hadn't fallen off, as had happened to Natalia, a Honduran woman who I sometimes worked with on the loin bagging line. Natalia had also experienced the numbness and tingling in her fingers – a doctor later diagnosed me as having occupationally-induced carpal tunnel syndrome – which she said had eventually subsided, but only after about 8 months. Other workers told me the pain, numbness, and tingling would never go away, much to my despair.

Michael's voice boomed as he towered over us mid-way up the stairs. He shouted at us for going to the bathroom outside of the designated break times, which amounted to less than an hour a day, and for coming back to the floor "late" from breaks. "When we say 'break,' y'all go to break! And when we're out there and we scream 'Boning,' you go back to work!" Going to the bathroom was a constant tug-of-war between workers and supervisors. Periodically, supervisors would institute a variety of rules for bathroom usage. Get the attention of a crew leader and wait for him to bring a replacement to your line position. Write your name on a clipboard with time out and time in from break. Workers pushed back against such rules because they violated their sense of basic human dignity. Instead, workers followed their own informal arrangement whereby they took turns to go to the bathroom, leaving others to cover their spots

on the line, or ensuring that those left behind would pick up the slack for them while they were away. But when supervisors insisted upon such rules, workers were forced to abide by them or risk suspension or termination. Most workers did submit to this most intimate mode of labor control, even to the point of wetting, shitting, or bleeding on themselves. And now here was Michael, berating us about going to the bathroom outside of our negligible break times, 14 hours into our shift.

He announced a new food safety policy that would begin in May, whereby any and all meat that fell on the floor would be thrown out as opposed to the current practice of assigning "product re-conditioners" who would pick up meat from the floor, wash it down with water, and return it to the line. As was typical of "food safety" policies, these would usually be applied at the discretion of supervisors but always through the threat of disciplining workers. "We're going to pay attention to see who cares and who doesn't care and we'll be happy to fire people and get a whole new group of workers in here!" I had been translating for Natalia because the Puerto Rican supervisor's (Luis) translation was inaudible. "I can't believe they talk to you this way after a day like this, after we kill ourselves here! What a thank you," I said to Natalia, who just shook her head in resignation, accustomed to such gratuitous menaces.

I thought that, having worked in another department at this plant for seven months before transferring to Loin Boning, I would be well-prepared for the change.[11] I knew the hours would

[11] When I was hired at the plant in August 2009, I was assigned to work in the Marination Department. This was a further processing department, where activities included seasoning, stuffing, and bacon-wrapping loin filets and tenderloins. Once workers prepared the product, usually working in groups at tables, they took positions on a line that ran the product through an individual packaging and sealing process. My usual position on the line was near the end, boxing the packaged product. This department was small (N~25), predominantly African American (~80 percent), with a white-dominated authority structure (African American crew leader, white supervisor, white superintendent). After working in Marination for 7 months, I requested a transfer to the Loin Boning and Packing Department, which was a large (N~200), core production department that was situated in the same production area as Cut Floor (N~175), majority Latino/a (75-80 percent), with an African American-dominated authority structure (2 Latino crew leaders, 1 Native American crew leader, 1 African American crew leader, 1 African American supervisor, 1 Puerto Rican supervisor, African American superintendent). I worked in Loin Boning and Packing for

be longer and the work more arduous, but nothing prepared me for the intensity of oppressive exploitation I would endure as a worker here. Not the cautionary remarks from the Loin Boning superintendent, George, who looked at me dubiously when I told him I was requesting a transfer to his department: "This over here is the real world." Not even the dire warnings of a Loin Boning worker who told me I would "regret life" and wondered aloud why in the world I would be asking to transfer there.[12]

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9 months until December 2010. My transfer was purposeful and strategic, as I wanted to experience and observe departments where the composition of workers, the authority structure, and working conditions differed significantly.

[12] An excerpt from field notes I recorded during my first month in Loin Boning convey the gravity of working conditions I encountered on the packing lines and my gloomy state of mind at the time:

> This shit sucks, my third week working over here in Loin Boning and Packing. It's awful, it's god awful. My back breaks at work, it's just killing me! My hands hurt, my fingertips are numb, my shoulder feels like it's down to the bone, and I'm feeling depressed, not feeling like I'm making any connections with any of the people I work with. This is probably one of the hardest things I'll ever do in my life. The best way I can describe it is as super-exploitation, wage-slavery, these are the kinds of terms that come to mind when I think of what this is that we're doing. Since I've started it's been a regular 13 ½ and 14 ½ hours ranging from 12-15 hours. You would never have thought the difference between 13 and 14 hours could be felt as acutely as it is, but it is. Workers expect to be leaving later and later, whenever work is done as far as the bosses are concerned. In a resigned, delirious way, workers will say "we're not leaving until 10 o'clock!" or "we're not leaving tonight!" or "we're not going home tonight!" It speaks volumes to me about the way in which exploitation has been internalized as there being no choice, no way out of the situation.
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> We're located alongside the cut floor, and packing is set off from loin boning at the end of that line. Packing bags loins that usually range between 10-30 pounds, tenderloins, and ribs, thrown back on the line to be vacuum sealed (by la tortuga) and boxed for shipping. In ribs you work either in partners or by yourself bagging ribs (e.g. Safeway extra meaty), Texas ribs that are boxed 18/box, two scales/scalers, several tables where workers trim ribs…I had started to both place myself and be placed at the loins. I thought the more interesting people were there and I wanted to figure out where I hurt the least. Tenderloins are bagged using *cucharas* [spoons] where, usually, two tenderloins are placed for bagging - not as easy as you think - at least 3 people work at this station. Some are meant for export to Japan, these are the motherfuckers because the bags are smaller. Tenderloins drop down a chute, and workers can push a lever to move the line (with piles of tenderloins) forward. Loin lines are two - one usually for bagging Japanese loins, often with a padding that is placed over the meat which is taken off the line and laid on a stand for bagging. Sometimes two people work each stand but usually just one both grabs loins and bags them. The other line is typically worked by several pairs, one who pulls loins off the line and the other who wrestles with bagging loins.
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> Loins are cold, fingers freeze, back throbs and burns, shoulders hurt. For person bagging, fingers feel like falling off, numbness in fingers from bagging, I'm worried about my fingers. [I go into more detail in the

The physically demanding nature of the work in departments like Loin Boning was made harder to bear by the line speeds, volume of work, and extremely long hours, and withstanding this was made more difficult in turn by the incessant surveillance, rushing, reprimands, and threats from supervisors. Not even breaks offered workers a chance to really relax, given that they were so short and that supervisors usually patrolled break areas and shouted for people to go back on the lines even before time was up. Worker-friends like Leticia and Natalia, with whom I discussed my research, insisted that my story recount the blistering humiliations they faced on a daily basis at work. For Leticia, Natalia, and many others, they said this is what hurt the most. But oppressive labor discipline regimes did not begin with Latino/a workers at Swine's. Rather, Swine's bears a long history of struggles between workers and management, one that is intertwined with the changing composition of the workforce since the early 1970s.

LABOR UNREST, LABOR DISCIPLINE, AND THE SHIFTING ETHNORACIAL COMPOSITION OF SWINE'S

THE EARLY YEARS

Horace A. Samuels, Sr. was one of nature's noblemen, at least according to the late great segregationist Senator Jesse Helms. This tribute was conveyed in President of Chester University Dr. David B. Jenkins' introduction of Samuels Sr.'s daughter and Chairman and CEO of the

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recordings]. Sometimes small hams come down the loin lines. Quantity of work is difficult to gauge relative to Marination. Depends on kill amount, cut floor orders, number of lines running, whether there is a "test" and how much (a mysterious portion of the work falls under these special orders). At different points in the day people report the combo count [of whole loins left to de-bone] on the floor and people begin to get a real sense of how much longer we will work. A typical count is 42 or 45 after the test is done. People will consider 32 or so a decent count, meaning we will get out around 7:30 p.m. Loin boning line can do between 12-16 combos an hour running two lines. The work is intense, at a speed that is almost unsustainable, the number of hours is brutal, and the work itself is heavy and strenuous. This creates a mood of generalized anxiety, cynicism, negativity, pessimism, desperation, a real bad mood. I've noticed that my mood is like a rollercoaster throughout the day, plummeting after 4-5 p.m. I think this mood contributes to relations among workers.

Swine Packing Company Laura Bosworth, the guest of honor at the 1990 meeting of The Newcomen Society (The Newcomen Society of the United States 1990). Samuels had turned a cow pasture into a steady meatpacking operation in the early 1950s, finding in Perry an ideal place to relocate and expand the business he had started in Pennsylvania. In the summer of 1973, Nature's Nobleman, incensed about the tide rising against him, delivered a stern warning to the rebellious workers at Swine's: "We do not want a union in this company, and we are not going to have one." And in considering that Swine's had illegally banned the distribution of union literature on company premises, subjected employees to interrogation about union activities, led workers to believe that union activities were under surveillance, and illegally fired workers who were union activists, the National Labor Relations Board ordered Swine's – and in particular Nature's Nobleman – to cease and desist from its unfair labor practices, and to reinstate its striking employees.

In 1974, 44 workers at this plant, mostly young African American men, went on strike to protest unfair labor practices by the company, which included harassment and termination of workers involved in union organizing activities. At the time, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, now the United Food and Commercial Workers, had initiated an organizing campaign at the plant that the company owner and plant management vehemently opposed and went to illegal means to quash, spying on, interrogating, and firing union activist-workers. Gary, a shy and mild-mannered 63 year old African American man who has worked a knife job since he began to work at Swine's in 1973 after returning from the Vietnam War, says one day a worker instructed him and his co-workers "y'all follow us at break time." At the moment, he didn't know exactly what was going on. Gary, eager to follow in the footsteps of his father who had worked at Swine's for three years before falling ill, had tried to get a job at Swine's for four or five months,

but so many people were applying that he couldn't get a job despite his persistence. After almost giving up, he was finally hired on his last attempt. Gary thought to himself "I had a hard enough time trying to get here. I'm not going out for nothing." He asked one of the guys what was going on and was told they were going on strike. Gary told him "I just got here. I can't afford to be going on a strike." Several workers who had walked out without knowing it was a strike were allowed back in, but it took almost 3 years for the strikers who were locked out by Swine's management to be reinstated to their jobs, and 14 years passed before they received their back pay settlement. The organizing campaign failed and even now a man Gary sees at church, who was fired from Swine's during the campaign, reproaches him "If it weren't for you, we would've got that stuff in there!"

When Gary started working at Swine's, almost all workers were local African Americans and only "one or two whites." After the strike, more whites were hired as replacements for black strikers and black union activists, who were bullied by supervisors and forced out in retaliation. Gary says union sympathizers' work was scrutinized by supervisors to a degree that others' work was not, and union supporters were singled out to do some of the toughest jobs. But management's strategy of bringing in white replacements didn't work out "because they didn't want to work that hard." Gary chuckles as he remembers one worker, an Indian preacher, who would tell white workers "that's a nigger's job, you ain't supposed to do that." Gary says the preacher "would get a kick out of it," seeing how white workers would squirm, and some of them "would leave right then."

After a period of apparent quiescence, organized labor resurfaced in a region that had long eluded it. The UFCW initiated an organizing campaign at Swine's in 1993, which culminated in a narrow election victory for the union in the summer of that year. Among the

concerns raised by union officials regarding working conditions at the plant, an outbreak of brucellosis had caused close to 50 workers out of the total workforce of 650 to fall ill between 1990 and 1993. Around this same time – the late 1980s and early 1990s – workers in a number of other food processing plants in North Carolina were waging their own battles for dignity at work, and unions took notice. From walkouts by the mostly Mayan workers at a Hensley Farms poultry processing plant in Harpers, to the wildcat strikes by the mostly African American workers at a Watts Farms turkey processing plant in Wattsville, and most famously the 15-year campaign to organize Pig Corporation workers at the Davis plant, this was a period of some agitation by labor across the industry (Fink 2003; Heltzer 1989). The workers at Watts who walked out in 1988 demanded to speak to the CEO of Watts Farms, Elliott Carson, son of Bob Carson, an early poultry producer in the region, and a powerful enemy of unions (Wolcott 1976). Carson finally stepped outside to see the workers who – incensed at a rumor about Carson referring to them as "black slaves" – shouted at him defiantly: "We are not your black slaves!"

Stunningly, the union win at Swine's would be overturned by order of a 1995 U.S. appellate court ruling that the National Labor Relations Board had erred in its determination of the proper collective bargaining unit. At that very moment of great disappointment and worker frustration, just as the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals dealt a crushing blow to workers at Swine's who thought they had won the fight for union representation, denying enforcement of the NLRB's bargaining order, a dramatic transformation was underway. Probably not by coincidence, the shift in the racial/ethnic composition of Swine's workforce began to accelerate. The composition of Swine's workforce was undergoing a profound transformation as Latino migrants, at first mostly men and increasingly from Honduras, began to fill positions throughout the plant at an accelerated pace. Court records suggest an idea of the place Latino/a migrants

occupied at Swine's in 1995. Among the reasons cited by Swine's for their refusal to bargain with the UFCW following the union's narrow victory in an NLRB-certified election was the alleged failure to accommodate Spanish-speaking workers. One might conjecture that at this time, between 1993 and 1995, Latino/a migrants would therefore represent as yet a minority of the nearly 900 workers by then employed at the plant. And of course, since the company brought up the issue of accommodation for Spanish speakers, one would suppose this was because they believed these workers would vote against union representation. Gary pinpoints the mid-1990s as the time Latinos began to work at Swine's in noticeable numbers, recalling the recent 15-year anniversary several long-time Latino workers commemorated with stickers on their hard hats. When I ask Gary why so many Latinos started coming in to the plant at that time, he says without hesitation "to keep the union out and make sure it didn't come back in!"[13]

ENFORCEMENT AND LABOR DISCIPLINE

The past has a funny way of living on in the present. As fate would have it, Billy, one of 44 workers who walked out on strike in 1974, and fumed about other workers who didn't, is now a crew leader on the boning line, disliked by workers for his gruff demeanor. Worse, Billy – an American Indian usually identified as white by workers, whose brother is a smokehouse supervisor – recently reminded a boning line worker he supervises that she is a "wetback" and will therefore do as he demands. Despite her protestations and those of her husband who also works on the boning lines, Billy was not reprimanded. Questioned by Human Resources staff

[13] Charlie LeDuff (2000) reported that at the world's largest hog processing plant, in Tar Heel, N.C., the composition had reversed itself between 1997 and 2000, from 50 percent African American and 30 percent Latino to 60 percent Latino and 30 percent African American. By 2008, when a third representational election was held and a union victory secured, the composition had shifted again to majority African American, a result of company-collaborated ICE raids. While much was made of Latino/a reluctance to support the union, Ernesto hangs his union badge proudly from a nail on the wall by the front door of their trailer, as he had been working there at the time. His brother Heriberto, and his wife Celia, still work there. Heriberto has TPS.

about the incident, Rocío, a Puerto Rican loin trimmer who receives relatively more favorable treatment from supervisors because they find her attractive (and perhaps because she is a citizen), would not confirm Elsa and her husband's allegations, and Ileana, an unauthorized Honduran whizzard knife worker with limited English ability, claimed she only understood bits of the discussion. James Jefferies, who in 1974 was a cut floor supervisor involved in the intimidation and persecution of union activist-workers that eventually resulted in court orders for restitution and the reinstatement of strikers, is now director of operations at Swine's, an old white guy that occasionally makes the rounds on the production floor and is still called on to quell insurgent workers with the casual threat of replacement.

When the company strategically elected to enlist in the federal E-verify program in 2008, which compares employees' I-9 form employment eligibility information to data from the Social Security Administration to confirm employment eligibility, Renata Chatuye, a Honduran Garifuna who had previously lived outside New York City, was hired as assistant human resources manager. Myrna was given the job of recruiter handling the initial interface with prospective employees. It was around this time when hiring personnel informed prospective applicants that they would no longer accept *papeles de puertorriqueños* [Puerto Rican identification documents]; they would need to obtain *papeles de chicanos* [Chicano identification documents] instead. This bizarre condition was perhaps intended to create a more credible paper trail of the work force, which had increasingly become "Puerto Rican." Upon finding out I was Puerto Rican, it was not unusual for a Honduran co-worker to tell me excitedly he too was from Bayamón or Río Piedras or Cayey, towns in Puerto Rico. Intended to project compliance with federal laws on employment authorization and therefore deter ICE raids of the sort the company had faced (or collaborated with) at other plants, participation in the E-verify program has had a

chilling effect on the hiring of unauthorized workers, and the dwindling numbers of unauthorized workers currently employed increasingly face the prospect of being fired or forced to resign upon the "discovery" that their documents are in question.

By 2011, Myrna's discretion had been limited to the point where she feared losing her job if she wasn't careful about hiring unauthorized workers, as she explained to her fictive daughter Ileana, a relative of Ernesto whom she developed a close relationship with since Ileana was hired three years ago. Telling me how a recruiter for hog farm labor she knows recently told her that work authorization is being seriously verified even for these jobs, Ileana explains: "The interviewer knows. It's like my mother [Myrna]. My mother knows if you are who you say you are once she interviews you. And with a heavy heart, even though she would like to [hire you] she can't because the company said no more. She says that the ones who managed to get in should take care of their jobs. At this point she risks her job, and she's not going to risk her job for someone else. When I started to work here she still could, but not anymore. From what I have heard, once you lose this job most people leave, because there is no longer any work to be found. Before people emigrated from there to here, but now we have to emigrate from here to there!"

Plant human resources managers instituted a piecemeal purging of unauthorized workers that would not risk disruptions to production such as would occur in the event of a sudden sweep by government authorities. The climate of fear this state of affairs creates has the added bonus for management of further dissuading unauthorized workers from rocking the boat in any way, whether by protesting working conditions or seeking medical attention for their injuries, since they know that now they are really biding their time. Their best, and increasingly only, prospect for employment hanging by a thread, these workers get by as best they can, and management squeezes every bit of labor effort it can from them until the day when they are "forced" to tell

them their papers are in question. Every few weeks, one or two workers in loin boning as in departments throughout the plant are let go in this way. Some abandon their jobs on the spot when they are told human resources wants to speak with them, assuming the worst, even the possibility that police or ICE are waiting for them, which is exactly how Cristina would be ambushed. Others are informed that their wages will be garnished to recover a debt or to pay child support (when a judgment has been issued against the social security number), forcing them to leave their jobs or continue to relinquish their wages to cover the real social security number owner's debts, which some workers feel they have no choice but to do. Workers purged in these ways frequently are robbed of their pensions, accrued vacation time, and attendance bonuses, and the sobbing but otherwise unmarked farewells of workers who poured their blood, sweat, and tears into this work for years – like Cristina, Adriana, and Luna – are a testament to the ultimate dispensability of all labor, no matter how perfectly exploitable.

ETHNIC SUCCESSION IN REVERSE?

A noticeable shift in the composition of new hires followed these more stringent enforcement measures, and certainly by March 2010 a majority of new hires were African American, older and more established Latinos and young second generation Latinos, and whites or Coharies, a group of Native Americans. The heyday of this cycle of ethnic succession was over, and the pendulum had begun to swing, if only briefly, in the opposite direction, a phenomenon that has been documented at other food processing facilities following raids and government investigation, such as at Faircloth Farms, a poultry processing company with operations in North Carolina. The plant's appetite for workers was apparent during several months from July 2009 to approximately October 2009, when applications were taken directly by plant officials instead of through the longer screening process that normally took place beginning with the local unemployment office. Throughout this period, dozens of job seekers – me included

– gathered in a line outside the factory gate around midnight for an overnight wait for a chance at a job at Swine's. Plastic numbers were handed out by a guard every day at 4:00 a.m. to the first 20 people in line for a 9:00 a.m. interview with Myrna, who decided on the spot who would get hired.

In June 2010 the company circulated by word of mouth a new policy on hiring that could have no effect other than restricting the supply of potential workers, and make current workers think long and hard about leaving the job. The company would no longer employ re-hires or people with a criminal record. Only a year before, the plant had no blanket restrictions on hiring people who had previously worked at the plant or people who had a criminal record. Remarkably, Myrna deploys the new no re-hire policy pre-emptively to dissuade some prospective workers from even applying. At a baby shower for Julio, Cristina's brother-in-law who works on the boning line and his wife, I listen as Myrna recounts to Susie, the one African American worker in attendance, that she had advised Shameela, an African American worker in the boning department, against her son applying for a job at Swine's. Shameela had approached Myrna about getting her son a job at Swine's. Despite the fact that there are p.m. shifts at the plant, and some departments that rarely work more than eight hours, Myrna told Shameela that if her son was in school at the community college, it would be difficult for him to commit to the job and that since there was no longer a chance of being re-hired in the future, he was better off "keeping that door open." Whatever other motives behind the implementation of such policies, in so arbitrarily limiting the supply of eligible applicants, the company would be poised to clamor for the kinds of workers it had the most taste for: immigrants.

And so in January 2011, one month after I left the job, Latina/o and African American workers at Swine's were blindsided by the sudden commencement of a new cycle of ethnic

succession, this time involving Haitian refugees that were resettled from Florida and from Virginia, where company officials had steered pioneering Haitian migrants to the epicenter of pork processing. Ileana says some of the Haitians show Myrna videos of the harsh conditions they left behind, families living under tarps, to underscore their desperate situations. Over this period of slow but steady upheaval, adjustments to the labor discipline regime ensured no slack in the wringing of workers' effort. In October 2010, the African American superintendent of loin boning was forced out and a friend of the human resources manager, an energetic white man plucked from the ranks of management at Berkshire Chicken, would bring exploitation to a new level, timing workers with a stopwatch to establish per minute standards that sped up the labor process significantly and instituting unlawful prohibitions on bathroom breaks that have resulted in workers – including a Haitian new hire – soiling themselves on the line.

SCALING UP THE DYNAMICS AT SWINE'S: EXPLAINING MIGRATION AND COMPOSITIONAL CHANGE

MIGRATION EXPLAINED: DEMAND AND SUPPLY-SIDE ARGUMENTS

Responding critically to the growing trend among prominent migration scholars towards emphasizing supply-side explanations for migration, in particular the role of social networks in sustaining and promoting migration independently of demand-side factors (Light 2006; 2004; Light et al 2002; Light et al 1999; Massey et al 2004), some researchers have called for renewed attention to demand-side explanations, especially employer recruitment (Izcara Palacios 2010; Champlin and Hake 2006; Krissman 2005). Indeed, analysis of trends in migration from Mexico to the U.S. shows the dramatic effect the recent U.S. economic recession has had on migration rates (Passel, Cohn, and González-Barrera 2012). In the context of a slumping U.S. economy, and possibly in conjunction with the increasingly hostile anti-immigrant policies and the vastly heightened workplace enforcement measures which have severely curtailed unauthorized

migrants' employment opportunities, net migration rates from Mexico have ground to a halt (Passel, Cohn, and González-Barrera 2012). Such susceptibility to a vastly transformed economic-legal-political field offers a sharp rebuke to the excessively supply-oriented accounts of migration. Just as the people and places in Southern communities Latino/a migrants have settled into are the inheritors of historical events that shaped their present circumstances, so too are Latin American migrants the progeny of a series of historical events that primed them to become international labor migrants and groomed them to be an abundant and reliable labor force for the region's agroindustrial complex at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

At Swine's, these legacies converge. Researchers have conceptualized the dynamics involved in such convergence as a model of "ethnic succession," which explains the process of compositional change at different levels (e.g. factory, occupation, industry) by accounting for the ordering of preferences of both employers and workers (Waldinger 1996). Interviews with area employers in 2000 confirm a preference for "Hispanic" workers in the animal processing industries (Leiter 2000), much as researchers have documented for other regions and industries where the ethnoracial composition of the labor force has shifted. Even so, employers are usually careful to maintain that they can only hire based on the pool of applicants they have, thus couching their preferences as insignificant factors against the impersonal and in any case external conditions of supply (Leiter 2000). However much causal weight we attach to employers' preferences, the ability to enact these preferences is situated within a structure of opportunity shaped by the legal and political environment that either facilitates or inhibits action according to those preferences. This opportunity structure is also influenced by the firm-level policies crafted by employers to maximize the potential for hiring that reflects their preferences at a given time.

Contributing to research that shows ethnic succession to be a process actively directed by management (Lopez-Sanders 2009), and not simply the effect of migrant social networks operating in the context of passive employer preferences, the timeline of events I outline shows how human resources managers at the corporate level have at times intentionally created the conditions for labor shortages that justify their recruitment of immigrant labor, in this case via government refugee resettlement programs. Faced with a severed pipeline for supplying their ideal, unauthorized workers – the result of "voluntary" or "involuntary" subjection to heightened workplace enforcement measures – industry agents still managed to mold the labor market conditions to suit their preferences for vulnerable workers. More broadly, this sequence of events shows how the process of ethnic succession is adapted in the shifting sociopolitical context of laws targeting unauthorized migrants. Hence, I account for formal, semi-formal, and informal organizational policies and practices, as well as federal, state, and local policies and practices that shape the structure of opportunity.

COMPOSITIONAL CHANGE EXPLAINED: THE ETHNIC SUCCESSION MODEL

The ethnic succession model of labor market incorporation emphasizes the *collective* nature of groups' search for economic opportunities, and supports the notion that immigrants and natives are often likely to be in a "complementary," as opposed to directly competitive, relationship to each other (Waldinger 1996). Still, scholars who draw on this model to account for compositional change at different levels – workplaces, occupations, industries – often seek to identify whether these changes were brought about by the replacement or displacement of incumbent workers. It is thought that when ethnic succession is driven by displacement dynamics, intergroup conflict is likely to be highest. In contrast, it is thought that when compositional change is driven by replacement dynamics, intergroup conflict is likely to be low.

Studies have applied the general logic of the ethnic succession model to analyzing the impact of migrants on the composition of labor markets in the U.S. South and the quality of relations between (usually) African Americans and Latinos.

Though conclusions about the extent to which Latino migrants "displace" or "replace" native-born whites and African Americans are not in any way definitive, studies have tended to interpret the evidence as supporting replacement (Griffith 1995; 2005; Skaggs, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Leiter 2000; Rosenfield and Tienda; Kandel and Parrado 2004).[14] Just as Grey (2000) found among Mexican poultry workers in Iowa, Griffith (2005) found that African American poultry workers in the U.S. South saw this work as "seasonal," moving in and out of the poultry workforce for various reasons, including injuries, problems at work, checking out other jobs. In an earlier period, prior to extensive Mexican in-migration, these workers moved in and out of poultry work rather freely, aware that re-gaining their employment would be fairly easy. Griffith argues that as Mexicans started entering poultry processing in the late 1980s, it became harder for African Americans to exit and enter the poultry labor force in this manner, since more and more Mexican workers were being hired to fill their positions, fueling ethnic succession and freezing out African Americans (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). Although poultry processing work has high turnover rates, it is not considered "seasonal work," as these

[14] Mexican immigration into coastal communities in the Mid-Atlantic was sponsored by the blue crab industry, when three employers sought H-2 workers, two of them based in North Carolina (Griffith 2005). By the end of the 1990s, and following restructuring in the seafood industry, fewer than 10% of the workers are A.A. women, mostly "elder women for whom the processors attempt to find as much work as possible" (Griffith 2005, 69). In eastern North Carolina's blue crab processing industry, the response to ethnic transition in late 1980s was "uneven," with some African Americans sensing they had been "pushed out" and others saying they took the opportunity to find alternative employment. Yet, it seems that as Mexican workers arrived, available work (a set amount determined by the number of workers and crabs to pick on any given day) and thus income declined, perhaps making these jobs even less attractive (67-68). On the other hand, this period coincided with increased opportunities for young African American women at community colleges, in the growing tourism industry, and in the expanding health care services sector.

scholars suggest. Nevertheless, Griffith's findings suggest a pattern of "displacement through replacement." Echoing the findings of others (Cravey 1997; Kandel and Parrado 2005; Striffler 2005; Marrow 2007) such compositional change, ambiguously attributable to displacement or replacement, is taking place outside of workplaces as well, in trailer parks and neighborhoods.

Kandel and Parrado (2004: 265) are equally uncertain about the pattern of ethnic succession unfolding in the poultry processing industry in the South, specifically in Duplin County, North Carolina and Accomack County, Virginia, where large Carolina Turkeys, Tyson, and Perdue plants are located. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, there was a significant compositional shift in the meat processing industry between 1980 and 2000: whites dropped from close to 70% to slightly over 30%, blacks increased from 30% to 50%, and Hispanics went from about 1% to 17%. However, noting that Latinos tend to be undercounted as per the National Agricultural Workers Survey findings, Kandel and Parrado say that "Hispanics may be replacing non-Hispanic whites, which, assuming the latter are moving into higher-paying jobs, leaves everyone better off. Non-Hispanic blacks may also be leaving the poultry industry in absolute numbers, but their increasing proportion suggests that immigrants may be competing for the same low-skill jobs." National estimates of the poultry processing workforce composition are 50% black, 40% white, and 10% Hispanic, but in North Carolina the proportion Hispanic is greater, and Kandel and Parrado note a level of 65% in one plant (2005: 269). Whites tend to occupy managerial positions, as well as some blacks, and Hispanics tend to be in manual positions.

Skaggs, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Leiter (2000) use EEOC data from 1993-1997 to study the distribution by race/ethnicity across occupations within industries These scholars interpret the data as showing primarily replacement of African American or white workers who are

leaving the worst jobs in the top ten industries for Latino employment, including in meat products, knitting mills, and household furniture manufacturing, the top three industries Latinos are entering. They consider the possibility that African Americans and whites are moving up within these industries or moving on to (presumably) better employment opportunities. On the other hand, they suggest a pattern of clear displacement of African Americans in the poultry and eggs and miscellaneous plastic products industries. Although the authors suggest that such findings point to industries where ethnic conflict might be more serious, their findings are only somewhat suggestive, and are subject to the limitations discussed above for the ethnic succession model.

Although it is not my objective to determine the precise mechanism that best explains compositional change at Swine's, the evidence I present suggests that replacement and displacement tend to co-occur, and that it is difficult to untangle the one from the other. First, the scale of agroindustrial development in this region, which expanded significantly in the 1990s, required an abundant and growing supply of labor. Indeed, some argue that immigration was a crucial element of the industrial strategy pursued by meatpacking firms which was based on plant (re)location to rural areas outside the historic centers of meatpacking (Champlin and Hoke 2006). While the baseline level of development of the agroindustrial complex in the early 1990s may have barely been able to subsist with only local native-born labor, particularly in the context of rising educational levels and employment prospects among African Americans who constituted the majority of the incumbent labor force, it is doubtful that the vast expansion of these industries that began in the 1990s would have been possible without the massive growth in the rural labor force through Latino/a in-migration. If this were the case, we could see dynamics of both displacement and replacement in the growth of the Latino share of the workforce in the

context of expansion. Alternatively, if industry expansion paralleled a growth in better employment opportunities for African Americans in other areas of the labor market, then we could see ethnic succession more characteristic of growth and replacement, or if it did not, we could see ethnic succession more characteristic of growth and displacement. These assessments take an aggregate perspective, looking at compositional change across whole industries or occupations as a function of demographic and economic shifts in the broader labor market.

At the micro-level of succession at Swine's we can see that it is not simply a matter of immigrants filling labor shortages as industries expand or as incumbent groups leave for better jobs elsewhere (ethnic succession through growth and replacement), but rather a complicated story with multiple feedbacks that revolves around how capital satisfies as well as creates the demand for super-exploitable workers in a shifting sociopolitical environment. Proving whether ethnic succession via replacement or displacement is the case is not my ultimate objective. Rather, my goal is to shed light on the social relational dimensions of dramatic demographic restructuring in workplaces as it unfolds in order to better understand how Latino migrants are becoming incorporated in the U.S. South. The ethnic succession model, focused as it is on the operation of migrant social networks and the closure (i.e. exclusionary boundary-drawing) they ensure for some migrant groups as well as employer preferences in the ordering of a labor queue, is limited by its built-in assumptions about the relationship between dynamics of compositional change and intergroup relations. Understanding social relations between Latina/o migrants and African Americans requires attention to the meaning-making dimensions of real and imagined encounters around group boundaries. Further, the evidence I present suggests an important consideration that is missing from studies of ethnic succession and which has crucial implications for intergroup relations. The conditions that inform employer preferences for

Latina/o migrants relative to native-born workers yield an "advantage" for them at the hiring interface that is simultaneously the basis for their "disadvantage" within the social organization of labor. Thus, I point to sources of grievance that pattern social relations among subordinate groups *beyond* "competition," the motivator that scholars typically highlight and which assumes displaced incumbent groups to be the aggrieved parties.

My argument is that the root of the problem is not competition from unauthorized migrants per se, but rather the tendency of capital to magnify and mine distinctions among workers. Employers often single out unauthorized migrants because they are an especially vulnerable population, but in their absence employers will seek other group-based attributes on which to base distinctions among workers. Long before Latinos ever showed up at Swine's, management had tried to undermine a nascent collective consciousness among African American workers by bringing in white replacement workers. This strategy failed because at the time, meatpacking jobs here had become identified squarely as "nigger jobs" and white workers shunned or fled them. The native/non-native distinction is a distinction employers make which is broader than authorization status, and the particular ethnoracial group identification that frequently signals being "from here" versus not produces different advantages and disadvantages for workers belonging to particular groups. In this sense, even Latina/o workers with legal permanent resident status or temporary protected status experience the vulnerabilities in the workplace that are thought to afflict unauthorized workers.

But it is important to recognize that these distinctions do not unequivocally favor one group over another, as I point out. In the case of Swine's, while it is possible that local African Americans saw shrinking opportunities for employment as HR personnel favored the hiring of Latino/a migrants in the mid to late 1990s ("displacement through replacement"), African

Americans that remained at Swine's probably saw growing opportunities for advancement at long last. And as the Latino/a majority established itself as the stable core of the production process at Swine's, Latinos began to sense that their own group position was the most subordinated of all, and that the African American minority that has continually replenished itself occupies a privileged position at Swine's at their expense. That native-born workers would occupy a comparatively more favorable position in the workplace is not a surprising proposition. What is important in this story is how these perceptions become *racialized* by those involved such that blackness is seen as a valuable resource and being *hispano* is a disadvantage regardless of authorization status. The ways in which Latina/o workers perceive their place in American society, discerned through their subordinate experience in the workplace vis-à-vis African Americans, has critical implications for how Latina/o migrants become incorporated into a shifting racialized system of belonging that retains, indeed is mediated by, white dominance. This latter point, that social relations among subordinate groups are structured through the refractory lens of white dominance, produces the qualities of what I refer to as *prismatic engagement* between Latinos and African Americans at Swine's. I delve into these dynamics in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 3

THE CATEGORICAL LANGUAGE AND MEANINGS OF SHOP FLOOR RACIAL TALK

Thomas, an older African American worker, and I were bagging a combo of one-piece ribs when we were joined by Rosa, a Salvador rib trimmer, and Vincent, a young African American. Thomas and I lean into the combo to grab ribs to feed to our partners who are holding long, narrow black bags they snatch out of a box thousands of times over. I'm handing Vincent a rib when he lays into Rosa with his typical taunts, seeming kind of cruel even though he is joking, insensitively referencing her recent abandonment by her husband Jaime in a sing-song tone. "Rosa, you need a new boyfriend, you gotta get you a new boyfriend, Rosa." As usual, this being the prohibited but common currency on the floor, Rosa was gnawing on a piece of candy. "Look at her with all that caramel up in her teeth," Vincent says, proceeding with a dose of sexual innuendo. "No, I have a boyfriend – Michael," she says mischievously.

I smiled to myself as I recalled Rosa's comment one morning several months before at the rib trimming table about a romantic dream she had had about our African American floor supervisor Michael, the two of them sharing an intimate moment on a beach. "Oh yeah? That makes sense," Vincent plays along. "You must be doing something to him because he doesn't bother you." Vincent tries to tease Rosa about having a thing for black men. "What's that word? Bollo? Mollo?" *Moyo*, Rosa and I blurt out at the same time. "That means nigger," Vincent says to Thomas. "That means what now?" Thomas responds, perhaps taken aback by the slap of the familiar slur. Vincent repeats himself and elaborates. "It means nigger. I mean, because *negro* is black but you say that and you think they calling you a nigger, but it just means black. But *moyo*" - he pauses to contemplate his explanation – "it's not like they always saying it in a racist way, but it's more like slang, like nigger [nigga] sort of." "Alright, well now I know, when I hear it I'll know," Thomas says nodding vigorously as he squats to dig out racks of ribs from the combo to feed to Rosa. Vincent wasn't finished explaining the intricate meanings of *moyo*. "Yeah, and then you gotta look at the person and be like "Hmm, you and me, are we cool?" I guess like when someone calls you a *moyo*, you need to check the person out and see in what way are they saying that word." "Ok, now I know, I didn't know that," Thomas replies, not seeming especially interested in this shop floor lesson. Rosa, who had been listening quietly at Vincent and Thomas's exchange, sealed the conversation with fitting irony, leveling at Vincent with perfect comedic timing "Shut up, *moyo*!"

This chapter examines the categories, uses, and meanings of ethnoracial talk deployed by Latina/os to express symbolic boundaries vis-à-vis their African American counterparts. It situates the language used by Latina/os to refer to American blacks, and the underlying significance of blackness these categories convey, within both the broader ethnoracial panoramas of Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador and the structured dynamic of an American workplace. In doing so, I show how a transnational field of meanings develops that devalues blackness universally and yet associates blackness with privilege locally in a Southern meatpacking plant. In the chapters that follow, I develop the crux of the story that is stringed together in this book: that the ways in which Latina/o workers navigate boundaries vis-à-vis African Americans in the workplace is inextricably tied to their sense of group position within the social organization of labor and in American society beyond the workplace. In other words, such boundary-making is intertwined with Latina/o migrants' perception that they are the most exploited workers at Swine's with unique vulnerabilities that condition their lives on the line and outside the factory gates.

The first section of this chapter describes the structure and language of race in migrants' origin communities, drawing special attention to the contrasts between Latin American and U.S. racial systems generally and the panoramas of Honduras and El Salvador specifically. The principal commonality between Latin American and U.S. racial systems – white dominance and the devaluation of blackness – predispose Latina/o migrants to view groups identified with blackness negatively in a broad sense. But the strong identification of black Americans as *moyos* – a term which has evolved in the transnational space that migrants occupy – and the pejorative meanings that such a designation reflects and reinforces, is a dynamic that unfolds in ways that convey its uniquely American character. In the second section of this chapter I propose an

analytical framework for understanding language as a symbolic boundary that reveals crucial social distinctions between Latinos and African Americans. In the third section of this chapter I focus on the deployment of ethnoracial forms of identification on the shop floor at Swine's, drawing attention to the categories, uses, and meanings of such language. Before concluding this chapter, in the fourth section I discuss how native-born workers navigate and challenge Latinos' use of such language, while pointing out the rarity with which native-born workers refer to Latinos in ethnoracial terms.

MOYOLO, MAYATE, MOYOTE, MOYO: THE STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE OF RACE IN MIGRANTS' ORIGIN COMMUNITIES

Although at a superficial level the "moyo" designation appears to merely refer to American blacks, upon further consideration "moyo" reveals much more about the "structure of feeling" that governs relations between Latinos and African Americans. As Vincent explains it, depending on the context in which it is articulated, "moyo" can be interpreted to mean either the unambiguously racist "nigger" or the familiarly casual "nigga." Indeed, although in this opening encounter Vincent appropriates "moyo" in his playful banter with Rosa, while Rosa comically casts it back at him after he finishes his elaborate discursion, at other times Vincent responded to this designation with far less flexibility.

In this chapter, I closely examine the deployment of ethnoracial forms of identification on the shop floor in order to shed light on their significance for understanding relations between Latina/o and African American workers. I argue that language is a vitally revealing medium through which Latinos draw boundaries between African Americans and themselves, but has been woefully neglected in the literature on intergroup relations. The source of the particular designation of African Americans as "moyos" can be located in a transnational field of ethnoracial meanings in which migrants are embedded. In order to trace this source, I must begin

with a discussion of the ethnoracial panoramas of Latino/a migrants' origin communities. This chapter argues that, while the racialized systems of stratification in Latino/a migrants' origin communities precondition them to view "blackness" negatively as a subordinate status, it is only in the U.S. context where such vaguely tangible predispositions take on the full-bodied form of meaningful relations between *groups*.

Vincent's consideration of how and why Latinos use the term "moyo" instead of the more direct "negro" designation invites a closer look at the categories and meanings that prevail in migrants' origin communities and which inform those they elaborate in the U.S. I explore in greater detail the specific ethnoracial panoramas of Honduras (and to a lesser extent, El Salvador and Mexico), given the scant scholarship on this context and the substantial contribution of Hondurans to the Latino agroindustrial labor force in the contemporary American South. The ethnoracial panoramas of Honduras and El Salvador, in particular, present interesting contrasts which I will focus on in greater depth below, drawing on insights gleaned from my interviews and conversations with Latina/o workers. I will tie these analyses back to the central theme of this chapter: the categories and meanings that Latinos use to designate and define native-born groups, especially African Americans.

Racialized systems of stratification throughout Latin America and the Caribbean differ from the U.S. model in important ways. Scholars have pointed to features which contrast with the U.S. model such as the greater fluidity of racial categories, their more fine-grained differentiations, their blurrier boundaries, and their closer relationship to somatic, cultural, and class markers than to ancestry or hypodescent (Telles 2004; Bonilla-Silva and Glover 2004; Wade 1997). For its part, the historiography of race in Latin America and the Caribbean has had

to unravel itself from the various nation-building projects which have shaped (mis)understandings of race and racial inequality in the region.

The racial ideology of *mestizaje* has been prevalent in the modern history of Mexico and Central America, as political and intellectual elites fashioned a national imaginary that could cement solidarity in newly independent republics. This new mestizo identity was predicated on a fusion of Amerindian peoples and Europeans and effectively marginalized Indian and African identities, representing the former as dead and erasing the presence of the latter altogether (Mollett 2006; Wade 2001; Gould 1998; Wade 1997). In Spanish colonial times, the ambiguities of position within the socioracial hierarchies of Latin America were more evident with respect to indigenous peoples than with Africans, whose status at the bottom of the colonial order was hardly questioned. Indeed, whereas debates regarding the treatment of native Americans centered around legislating both their protection and exploitation, the primary concern with Africans was ensuring control over them (Wade 1997: 27).

Certainly, both were oppressed and exploited – indeed exterminated – but colonial authorities did make distinctions between indigenous peoples and Africans which are important to understand present-day socioracial hierarchies in the region. While Indians were not barred from intermarrying, there were anti-miscegenation laws that restricted the marital options of Africans, though these of course fell by the wayside. And whereas indigenous (Amerindian) groups have accessed state recognition of rights on the basis of unique categorical identification, the non-recognition of black identities in Latin America has had the paradoxical effect of permitting popular alternatives to the most stigmatized statuses, while impeding redress based on claims to these identities. The devaluation of blackness was formalized in the early to mid-twentieth century, at the height of eugenicist thought and practice, when Central American

republics institutionalized white supremacy in laws that barred the entry of blacks and other groups considered undesirable for the nation and threats to the livelihood of Honduran workers (Andrews 2004; Euraque 2003; England and Anderson 2004). In Honduras, scholars have argued that the elevation of the mythology surrounding the indigenous Lempira as representative of the nation – in the form of its currency – was a racial project aimed at solidifying Honduras as a mestizo nation and marginalizing the contributions of blackness (Euraque 2003).

Given their departure from U.S. racial categorical schemes, an issue in the study of racial systems in Latin America has been the question of how to identify "blacks." While some have argued (or implicitly assumed) that "blacks" should be limited to those people who identify as such, other scholars argue that such a specification unduly constrains the study of "blackness."[15] After all, the denial or suppression of blackness (and blacks) has been a crucial element of many Latin American nation-building projects, and perhaps doing the former merely perpetuates this ideological erasure. But for all the differences between the Latin American and U.S. models, they all share racialized systems of stratification that converge around a core of white dominance.

[15] Dzidzienyo and Fontaine coined the term Afro-Latin America to "designate all regions of Latin America where significant groups of people of known African ancestry are found." Andrews unpacks this definition, explaining that it is localized, rather than disaporic, and requires self-identification or identification by others as "black" in order to be counted as such. For Andrews, it also requires a threshold above which such a region/population will be included in Afro-Latin America. But the basic problem underlying the idea of Afro-Latin America is identifying the population that is to be considered Afro-Latin American (Andrews 2004: 5): "How then do we "know" who is of African ancestry and who is not? We "know" simply by accepting what natives of the region tell us." Unfortunately, such a definition of Afro-Latin America excludes those three countries that are of primary interest to my study – Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador, especially if the unit of analysis for passing Andrews' threshold is the country. All is not lost, though, as these countries, despite their much smaller Afro-Latin American populations as defined by Andrews, nevertheless reveal enough about their socioracial hierarchies to understand the position of blackness (and whiteness) in the dominant society.

Honduras counts several independent streams of Afro-descended people in its history, but only some of these are identified (by themselves and by others) as black.[16] Among the various African and Afro-descended populations to arrive in Honduras between the 16th and early 20th century, some are socially recognized as "blacks" while others are not. These include African slaves, brought in the mid-16th century to replace the depleted population of indigenous slaves, many of whom had escaped by the 1600s and mixed with dispossessed indigenous peoples, poor whites, and free blacks, and would come to be categorized by colonial authorities as a *casta* (e.g. ladino, mestizo, mulato, zambo) depending on the particular combination. In fact, descendants of African slaves brought in the 1600s, who escaped or otherwise found freedom and mixed with others make up a substantial number of people in Olancho, the department from which many North Carolina Hondurans originate. Although these people would be classified as black by US standards, they do not identify as black but rather as mestizo (Bueso in Centeno 1997, cited by England and Anderson 2004: 7).

In the 1600s and 1700s, British settlers to the Bay of Honduras brought African slaves to the North Coast, some of whom mixed with the Miskito Indians, and in the 1840s, black freedmen from the Cayman Islands followed white Cayman Islanders to the Bay Islands of Honduras. A third major Afro-descended population are the Garifuna, Their story is described as the fusion of Carib Indians and Africans marooned on St Vincent, later exiled to the Bay Islands by the British at the end of the 18th century. From there, Garifuna migrated to mainland Honduras, and to coastal areas from Belize to Nicaragua. In the early 20th century they became an increasingly important part of the multinational fruit companies' labor force. The last major stream was comprised of West Indian blacks brought by multinational fruit companies to work

[16] Afro-Hondurans represent a diversity of histories with respect to "arrival to Honduras, levels of assimilation to mestizo society, and current configurations of culture and language" (England and Anderson 2004:6).

on plantations in the early 20th century, which sparked labor conflicts that nationalists fanned in support of racist immigration laws (England and Anderson 2004; Andrews 2004; Euraque 2003). Despite the fact that Honduran elites since the early 20th century carefully crafted a nationalist narrative that depicted a Spanish-Amerindian mestizo nation, ethnoracial minority groups like the transnational Garifuna community have achieved some measure of supranational political voice in recent decades (England 2006).

In contrast, El Salvador stands out for the near total absence of any mention of Africans, blacks, or slaves in its historiography, despite the fact that such a wholesale absence did not exist in reality. If Honduras, at least in recent decades, has acknowledged indigeneity *and* blackness as partly constitutive of the national imagination, especially as these come together in the Afro-indigenous Garifuna (England 2006), the national imagination of El Salvador has been characterized by the erasure of indigenous peoples and the denial of a black contribution altogether (Tilley 2005). Indeed, the near complete absence of blacks or blackness in Salvadoran historiography is usually justified by reference to the very small number of African slaves that were brought in the colonial period. The popular idea that there are no blacks in El Salvador is accompanied by a strong scorn reserved for blackness itself. This sentiment was expressed clearly by Hernán, a short Salvadoran rib trimmer and former rebel fighter from Aguilares, who exclaimed one day that "If there had been blacks in El Salvador, they would have all been killed during the war." A less dismal, but equally revealing, insight into the valorization of blackness was proffered by Claudia. Affectionately referred to by her family as "Chele [White]," Claudia's younger brother Antonio apparently grew up feeling disdained for his darkness. "No me quieren porque soy negro!" [They don't love me because I am black!], he would frequently protest as a child. Their experiences are not unlike those childhood experiences memorialized by Mexican

American writer Richard Rodriguez (1982) in his *Hunger of Memory* and by Puerto Rican writer Piri Thomas (1967) in his *Down These Mean Streets*. Ironically then, given the supposed lack of a socially discernible group of Afro-descended people in El Salvador, Salvadorans nevertheless articulate a polarized racialization in which whiteness is positively valorized while blackness is negatively valorized. Perhaps because of the legacy of erasure and denial, Salvadoran workers asked to articulate aspects of their country's ethnoracial panorama provided vexing accounts. Sitting in her living room one evening, I ask Sara why people say there are no blacks in El Salvador. Sara explains:

> "There are no *negros* because El Salvador is too small, and other countries are bigger so they can go there. Yes, there are *negros*, but they aren't born there, they aren't native to there. They come from other places. You see them. You're not surprised to see a *negro*. But it's not like in Honduras, where there are cities, departments that are *morenos*. Where we're from, no. There are *indios* – that's what we call them, *indios*, which are the *indigenas*, that dress in *refajos*, sandals, and *caites*."

On another occasion, I ask Sara how Salvadorans talk about blackness.

> "That I recall, no one pays attention to whether there are or aren't blacks, since there never are any. Yes, there are people who are *morena* - *morena* but not of the *negra* race. They're born that way, but it's not that they come from a *negra* race. Rather, there are *morenos*, people who are *morena* but not *negra*."

Claudia provided a similar perspective on the ethnoracial panorama of El Salvador, with added flair which conveyed in no uncertain terms the status of blackness and indigeneity in El Salvador.

> "The thing is that in El Salvador there aren't any distinctions, because over there we don't have any other class. There aren't people who are *morena*. There aren't people who are white. I mean, there aren't *bolillos* or *negros*. In El Salvador you're going to see people just like us. I mean, well if you go to Honduras, Honduras has a class like us, and a *negra* class. I mean, there are the Garifunas, what they call them. Not in El Salvador.

Recalling the work of Tilley (2005) on indigeneity in El Salvador, I asked Salvadoran machine operator Claudia about this group, which elicited from her a response that communicated Salvadorans' strong repudiation of both blackness and indigeneity.

> "No, there aren't any. We don't admit any. *Ni indios ni negros*. We sent them to Honduras, and others to Guatemala and Mexico. In El Salvador we don't want them…No, we don't want them! Then we're going to be speaking in dialects. We're not going to understand each other [laughing].

Honduran workers were far more likely to describe a complex ethnoracial panorama in their origin country than Salvadorans were, and they also noted important contrasts to the deployment of ethnoracial boundaries in Honduras and the U.S. Gerardo, a 26 year old rib sorter, contrasts the salience of bold ethnoracial boundaries in the American context to the situation in Honduras. Over breakfast one Saturday morning at a Waffle House, I asked him about the use of ethnoracial identifiers in Honduras:

> "In general, it doesn't exist the way it does here, where you do separate them – the *moyos* from the *bolillos* and the *hispanos*. Over there if you want to specify 100% you say the *negro* or *moyolo*, but it's not so much to discriminate against them or to talk about them as *negros*. If you want to talk specifically about that person's race [then you specify], but otherwise it's not used as much. Like here, where you do have to separate them, to say specifically that a *moyo* said this or a *bolillo* said that."

His comments reveal several distinct features of racialization schemes in Honduras – and probably other Latin American countries – and the U.S. Gerardo distinguishes between the nearly obsessive identification of a person's "race" in speech in the American context, where races "have to be separated," to the situation in Honduras, where this explicit identification is considered optional, extra information, or used in special cases to uniquely identify someone. In fact, comments from Gerardo and other Hondurans reveal that strong *ethnoracial* identification is typically reserved specifically for Garifuna (and smaller recognized minority groups), not for the broader Honduran population, some of whom are also Afro-descended. In this sense, when I

asked Hondurans about their country's ethnoracial panorama, contrasting it to the U.S. "where you have African Americans, whites, Latinos, etc.," most would single out the Garifuna of the North Atlantic coast. If I asked about *negros* in Honduras, respondents would often answer that there are a lot of Garifuna, especially in the coastal region, downplaying distinctions among the heterogeneous non-Garifuna Honduran population. In fact, this understanding of who belongs to the category "blacks" (i.e. ethnoracial minority groups like the Garifuna) is also reflected in scholarly undertakings on the topic of blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean (e.g. Yelvington 2001). Even those scholars whose explicit focus is "blackness" in Latin America wrestle with identifying who is to be considered "black," beyond the recognized ethnic minorities (Torres and Whitten 1998).

Asking Hondurans to describe the ethnoracial panoramas of their communities of origins could be akin to pulling teeth, so much less bold did the ethnoracial group boundaries appear to them. My discussion with Cristina was a stark illustration of the difficulty Hondurans could have when asked to articulate it. Asked to articulate the different groups in Honduras, Cristina insisted people were just "Honduran" or whatever nationality they belonged to. Prodded further, she distinguished between Garifuna – whom she also referred to as *morenos* or *negros* – and "us," people "of the other color, not *negros*." Pressed to describe the "distinct groups" in Honduras, Cristina extolled the artful skills of "negritos" who easily peel coconuts by hand, and play music and dance *punta* on the beaches of the North Coast.[17]

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[17] **Cristina**: Between us and them, they're called *morenos*.
Vanesa: Who calls them that?
Cristina: We do. A los *negros* – those of black color. *Morenos* is dark skin. We call people of black color *morenos*. They speak Spanish and their own language. But we don't get along badly. Actually, we like it because when we go to the beach they play music and dance *punta*. *Punta* comes from them!
Vanesa: But what about within your own communities, like where you lived with Ernesto's family. There's people that when you look at them, they're really dark, and other people, are really light. Is that acknowledged there in some form?

Cristina: Yes. In Olancho?
Vanesa: Outside of the Garifuna communities.
Cristina: Yes, the person who is as white as I am is rare there. Maybe because of their parents' origins. But not the majority, nor their hair.
Vanesa: And what name do they give that person?
Cristina: Just the place. Olanchanos, if they're from Olancho.
Vanesa: No, I mean, like here in this country, people talk about *blancos*, *negros*, *hispanos*. So in Honduras, are there less distinctions between groups?
Cristina: No, there are Koreans, Turks, and Americans. But we don't look at them like "Who are these people that come here?"
Vanesa: But what about among Hondurans themselves? Do people talk about different groups? Or are there different words to describe people who look differently? Like, someone from Olancho, who was dark-skinned, is there a word to describe them?
Cristina: No.
Vanesa: So people don't talk of *negros*, *morenos*, or they do?
Cristina: Well, of the *negros*, just *morenos*. But if we're on the bus and they're speaking in their language…[interrupted by the kids she cares for]. But there in San Pedro there is a *colonia* that is just theirs. Only *negritos* live there. The *colonia* of the *morenos*, of the Garifunas. I don't know why they made that *colonia* just for them.
Vanesa: And so what do they call someone like you over there?
Cristina: Over there? Just my name, normal. Just that they know, if I get to a place and there aren't people like this, then they know I'm not from there. Because when I got to Olancho, people said "Right that you're not from here?" Because of the way I talk and the physical, the color. Because the place where I'm from people are like this. It borders Guatemala. Because people were more related with the *indios*. So to them my hair is *indio*. It's just that I have more *indio* in me than…
Vanesa: Than what?
Cristina: Than…It's that we're all *indios*. All of us are *indios*, mixed with Spaniards. Because Spaniards arrived in Honduras, but *indios* were the ones that lived there. The Spaniards arrived and they mixed. We wouldn't be this way, but we're mixed. Our hair is more *indio* that Spaniard.
Vanesa: And the Africans?
Cristina: The Africans?
Vanesa: They're there too, right? I mean, they got there too.
Cristina: Yes. The *negritos*? They're not from there either. They got there too. But we wouldn't be this way…the *indios* are different. The *indio* hair is like this, and the African hair is *colochito* [curly]. So it doesn't get confused. The places where it's like this, in Honduras it's just two places. They're called Copán and Santa Bárbara. Just that in Santa Bárbara, people are white but rosy [coloradita]. Now, in the city of San Pedro you will find all types. Since people arrive there from all over. People aren't distinguishable, since people are from all over. But if I go to a specific place, outside of the city, people know I'm not from there.
Vanesa: And in Honduras, do people talk about racism against darker-skinned people?
Cristina: No. Actually, they like to make coconut bread. They peel the coconuts by hand. Fast.
Vanesa: Who?
Cristina: The *negros*. They have a specialty of peeling them [coconuts] like this, and putting a straw in them. We can't do it. They are the Garifunas.
Vanesa: And who are "we"?
Cristina: We are…of the other color, not *negros*. Because they're Honduran too. They're born there. If they sell things, we buy them.

The association between blacks and ethnic minorities was quite strong among Hondurans when asked about the ethnoracial panoramas of their origin country. [18] Talking with Carina, a Honduran boning line worker, about her experience working with Haitians, who began working at Swine's in growing numbers starting in January 2011, immediately sparked this connection for her. And, as was the case for Cristina, it also triggered a fondness in speaking of these groups that I did not find among other Latinos (Salvadorans and Mexicans). This "fondness" was the sort of benevolent racism typical of other Latin American (and Brazilian) contexts, where the music, dance, food, as well as perceived lifestyles and personality traits of blacks are represented with a bemused objectification that is fraught with affection and disgust, intimacy and stigma, all at once.

> "There are many dialects in my country as well.[19] And Garifuna is the most predominant one. In La Ceiba and Trujillo, I had many friends. Because the *afroamericanos* over there are from there [note her adoption and transference to the Honduran ethnoracial panorama of *my* terminology for American blacks]. So we feel equal, because we're from the same country. There isn't that racism, that hate, that discrimination. The department we're from [she and her sister, Leticia], is one of the places with the most Garifuna. And there are other *razas negras* that are not Garifuna. The *ingleses*, *misquitos*, *belices hondurenos*. There are some very good things about them. Their food is delicious. And they, as

[18] Ileana, like her in-law Cristina, had a peculiar response when I asked her about the ethnic or racial distinctions that were common in Honduras. Ileana had her own interpretation of the popular ethnoracial language in Honduras. Her mention of "Americans" or "gringos" who backpack in Honduras, and whom she first refers to as "bolillos" shows the elision between national and racial identification (i.e. being American means being white). Her response shows that within the strictly Honduran ethnoracial landscape, "blacks" are almost automatically associated with Garifuna.

Vanesa: In Honduras, maybe on the North Coast they talk more about this, like here in the U.S. where people talk about *negros*, *blancos*, *bolillos*, *hispanos*, *moyos*, how do people in Honduras describe people in that racial sense? What words do they use? How are the people distributed?
Ileana: Actually, in the area where I'm from, when a *bolillo* arrives – because sometimes they go there, they go there carrying their backpacks – over there when people see a *bolillo* it's like it makes them happy they came.
Vanesa: But over there they don't call them *bolillo*
Ileana: No, Americano. Or gringo. They call them gringos. People love them there.
Vanesa: But what about among Hondurans, not the Americans that vacation there, I mean black Hondurans, or Garifuna, or *morenos*?
Ileana: Over there we call them *morenos*. *Morenos* we call them.

[19] Carina had been telling me about her experiences so far working with Haitians, who had begun to work at Swine's around January 2011, and whose numbers were increasing rapidly among new hires.

> Garifuna, many prefer to have *hispanos* as friends. They'll say 'Look at that *negra*, she did this or that to me.' And if you, as an *hispana*, rubbed her the wrong way, they'll say 'Look at that *india* tal por cual.' But you don't feel offended because they are your race, they're from your country and you're in your country. They're from another country but since they've been there for generations... [20]

Carina's sister Leticia schools me on the proper etiquette for making ethnoracial identifications in Honduras, while also explaining how she came to learn of "moyo."

> "In school I had *morena* classmates. Because over there you don't call them *negros*. *Negros* is offensive. Same as here. So you call them *morenos*. Here, *negros* feel offended if you call them *negros*. Or *moyos*. In fact, I didn't know that word 'moyo.' Here is where I first heard that you call them 'moyos.' Because in Honduras you say *morenos*. Or *mayates* too. *Mayates*, *prietos*. But it's offensive."[21]

Unlike Carina, Cristina's in-law Ileana is under the impression that *mayate* is not a term that is poorly received by those who are identified as *morenos*.

> "Over there [in Honduras], they [blacks] don't get mad if you call them mayate. We had a compañero and we called him mayate, and he would answer quickly. In other words, he wouldn't get mad. I think he liked it more when people called him mayate than when they called him by his name. Because when he would sign the yearbook, or write on his desk, he would write "El Mayate." In other words, it never bothered him, and he was from Tela, from a place called Tornabe. And it didn't bother him."

Leticia is less sanguine than Cristina, her sister Carina, or Ileana about the social status of blacks in Honduras.

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[20] Lest we forget that subordinate groups in non-U.S. contexts also encounter one another through the prism of white dominance, an example from Honduras provides a sharp reminder. Political ecologists studying land struggles on the north coast of the Honduran Mosquitia between indigenous Miskito[20] and Afro-indigenous Garifuna have shown these to be intertwined with "racial struggles," as both subordinate groups deploy dominant ideologies that resonate with the region's socioracial hierarchies in order to support the primacy of their position and disparage the other group and their claims (Mollett 2006). Whereas the Miskito mobilize anti-black ideologies that characterize Garifuna as "savage" and "violent," the Garifuna propel ideologies that depict Miskito as "ignorant" and "backward" people. Thus, much as is the case for relations among subordinate groups in the U.S., subordinate groups in other contexts – in this case the Honduran North Coast – also encounter one another through the refractory prism of dominant groups.

[21] Noting that Leticia is using the term 'hispano' to refer to ethnoracial categories in the Honduran context, I ask if this term is used there. "No, the most common term is ladino." I ask Leticia if Hondurans also say 'moyolo,' a term another Honduran worker had mentioned to me and whether that is the source of 'moyo.' She responds it is not the source of 'moyo,' since "You can call any hispano a moyolo."

> "Racism is also practiced over there. In Sabá, where we're from, there were two familias morenas, and these were the Williams' and the Jones'. And all of the women married hispanos. But the same bad things were practiced - despising people because they are *negros*. I had a classmate who nobody wanted to share a seat with in class. Over there they eat a lot of coconut with seafood, and that emanates from their pores. She was a good friend of mine. She was Garifuna, she was the only one that sat with me. I didn't care that she smelled bad. You will also see many *hispanos* that are *morenos*. Discrimination, racism also exists but not like over here where it's front and center. Over there we have only three groups: *hispanos*, *morenos*, and foreigners. There are people like you, they call them 'gringas de cerro' [hill gringas].[22] The children of an *hispano* and a *moreno* is called *mulato*."

While profoundly confused at my attempts to extract from her a list of categories used in Honduras, Cristina easily identified the primary designations for ethnoracial groups in the U.S. context. Like Carina, Cristina told me she first learned of "moyos" in North Carolina but she also indicated that her brothers living in Minnesota had never heard of this designation. Cristina also understood that African Americans did not like being referred to as *moyos* but nevertheless believed the term to be benign. I asked her where she first heard "moyo" and why she thought African Americans did not like the term.

> When I got here, I heard about the *moyos* and the *bolillos*. But they get mad when they're called *moyos*. *Morenos* get mad when they're called *moyos*. Because I said something there at the factory. Vincent – with someone who spoke Spanish – asked me why I called him *moyo*, what did *moyo* mean. And I didn't know how to explain it. I just know that's what people call them. But I don't think it's bad. I don't think it's bad – *moyo*. Because Heriberto [her brother-in-law] is *trigueño* [literally "wheat-colored," refers to having light brown skin] and his brothers call him *moyo*. All his brothers call him that. "Where's the *moyo*?" "Is the *moyo* here?" And Heriberto doesn't get mad.[23]

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[22] Cristina disputes that "gringas de cerro" is a designation for people "like me or her" in Honduras.

[23] Sometimes Hondurans and Salvadorans refer to themselves as *negros*, but never in the sense of belonging to blacks as group but rather of being somewhat dark in skin tone, illustrating the distinction between race and color labels that some scholars have studied in the Latin American context (Golash-Boza 2010). On one occasion, I was driving through downtown with Sara, when she remarked in a tone of disgust about all the blacks out on the street. When I gave her a look of disapproval, she shot back, in an ironic tone, "I am *negra*." Sitting in Cristina's living room one afternoon as we discussed the ethnoracial panoramas of Honduras and the U.S, her brother-in-law Heriberto proclaimed "I am *negro*!" as he outstretched his arms to show his skin tone. But the chuckles of Cristina and her husband Ernesto betrayed the hyperbolic character of his comment.

Both Ileana and her husband Jorge concur that "moyo" has its origins in the parlance of Mexican migrants, and that their adoption of this term happened only as a result of contact with Mexican migrants and other Latinos established in workplaces in the American South, such as at Swine's. Jorge tells me that "When we came here, we called them *morenos*. That [moyo] comes from the Mexicans. They say they are *moyos*, and they say the Americans are *bolillos*. More than anything we've picked up those words from the Mexicans. *Morenos* don't like to be called *moyo*. And Americans don't like to be called *bolillos* either." Ileana agrees concurs with this explanation, emphasizing her understanding that being referred to as *moyos* is hurtful to African Americans. "Truth is I first heard that [moyo] at the plant. But that came from the Mexicans most of all, saying "moyo" and "bolillo." More than anything, I heard if from the Mexicans, and you start picking up words and they stick. But many Americans – *morenos* don't like being called *moyo*. Because they feel bad when they're called *moyo*."

The etymology of the term "moyo" is difficult to trace. One anthropologist documents the use of *moyo* among *morenos* in the Southern Pacific Coastal Mexican state of Guerrero, which has a concentration of Afro-Mexicans, as an insult that refers to U.S. blacks. Although the origin and meaning of the term are not entirely certain, scholars have suggested that *moyo* might derive from the Nahuatl "moyote," which is a kind of black bug (Lewis 2000).[24] Why a term derived from Nahuatl would be used by Mexicans in Mexico to refer to U.S. blacks but not to black or *moreno* Mexicans in Mexico is perhaps odd. But its usage suggests the term evolved in the American context, and was perhaps re-exported to the Mexican context by returned migrants, where it maintained its singular reference to American blacks as opposed to blacks more generally. Hondurans and Salvadorans report not having heard the word until they learned it in

[24] This speculation has the support of renowned linguist Fritz Hensey (Stephens 2012: pc; Hensey 2010: pc).

the U.S., some hearing it for the first time when they started working at Swine's, and they still cannot say definitively where the word comes from or what it means, other than referring to U.S. blacks, though most credit Mexicans as the source of the term. They are mostly ambivalent about or claim to be unaware of its pejorative connotations. But a few say they understand that African Americans do not like being referred to as *moyos*. The latter usually project far less negative views of American blacks than other Latino/as, and their more nuanced consideration of the symbolic functions of language reflects social boundaries between these groups that are less intensely racialized, a point I will return to later in the chapter.

Concepts for Understanding the Importance of Symbolic Boundary-Making and Language in a Maturing Migrant Destination

The analysis in this chapter brings into sharp focus the typically implicit relationship between symbolic and social boundaries, foregrounding the ways in which conceptual distinctions and representational devices communicate social differences in status ossified as groups (Lamont & Molnar 2002; Emirbayer 1997; Somers 1994). I aim to situate the study of inter-group boundary work in the most crucial social domain of both native-born workers' and Latin American labor migrants' lives – work. Social identity theorists have defined identities as "strategic social constructions created through interaction, with social and material consequences" (Howard 2000: 371). In this sense, language is crucial to the production of identities. In this chapter, then, I draw attention to the shop floor language that produces and reflects ethnoracial boundaries between Latinos and African Americans in particular.

I argue that understanding the identities that Latina migrants assume through their incorporation into American racial and class stratification systems demands attention to the ways in which language is deployed to express symbolically the socially significant distinctions that inhere in ethnoracial boundaries. Ethnoracial nomenclature, or ethnonymy, is a symbolic

boundary that both reflects and magnifies social boundaries as groups perceive these. As such, attention to the forms, frequency, and contexts of ethnonymic expression reveals crucial information about the character of intergroup relations and the positions occupied by various groups in a given stratified system of belonging (Stephens 2003).

Studies of social relations in the context of the "new immigration" have not mined the symbolic functions of ethnoracial identification for what these can tell us about how putative groups project their collective understandings of other groups as well as their own. Although perhaps scholars cannot be faulted for taking for granted the social realness of groups often now called "blacks" or "Hispanics," it is another thing to ignore the existence and implications of ethnoracial language used to designate and characterize these groups in organic contexts. This is an enormous oversight, tantamount to taking for granted the designations of Southern European immigrants in the early twentieth century as 'guineas' and 'dagos,' or overlooking the inconsistent ways in which social and legal categorizations as 'white' were applied to these and other groups, or accepting the 'wetback' label as a neutral indicator for Latino/a migrants. Scholars have shown the importance of understanding who gets classified as what, what these classifications mean, and how classification happens for comprehending "race" as a discourse (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009; Loveman and Muñiz 2007; Roediger 2005; Nobles 2000; Haney-Lopez 1996; Shirley 2010). Language in the form of ethnoracial identification can hardly be considered a neutral arena of categories which are merely referential rather than representational.[25]

[25] I do not seek to make definitive attributions of primacy with respect to whether "race" or "ethnicity" should be considered the 'master' category. This debate is long-standing and unwieldy, and resolving it here is neither necessary nor intended. Some important works on either side of this debate include Roediger (2005), Wade (1997), and Steinberg (2001[1981]). Barrera (2008) examines this debate with respect to Latinos specifically. Throughout the dissertation I refer to "ethnoracial" as opposed to one or the other to capture the fact that, regardless of which scheme is considered the broader one, it is how these schemes intersect as particular *groups* that matters for my

Indeed, it is perplexing that studies of social relations in the context of the "new immigration" have not mined the symbolic functions of racial talk for what these can tell us about how putative groups project their collective understandings of other groups as well as their own. Although perhaps scholars cannot be faulted for taking for granted the social realness of groups often now called "blacks" or "Hispanics," it is another thing to ignore the existence and implications of ethnoracial language used to designate and characterize these groups. Given the prevalence with which this language appeared throughout my fieldwork, it is hard to believe that these kinds of designations did not manifest in other researchers' data, though perhaps researchers did not interpret them as data worth noting. Yet, this is an enormous oversight, tantamount to taking for granted the designations of Southern European immigrants in the early twentieth century as 'guineas' and 'dagos,' or overlooking the inconsistent ways in which social and legal categorizations as 'white' were applied to these and other groups, or accepting the 'wetback' label as a mere indicator for referencing Latino/a migrants. Scholars have shown the importance of understanding who gets classified as what, what these classifications mean, and how classification happens for comprehending "race" as a discourse that naturalizes more or less discrete human groups based on perceptions of difference, primarily related to physical appearance and ancestry, but also to attributions of mental abilities, personality traits, and cultural dispositions (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009; Loveman and Muñiz 2007; Roediger 2005; Nobles 2000; Haney-Lopez 1996).

Rather than "vigilantly doubt the racial categories" they use, social scientists have instead been certain that they can write about "Hispanics" and footnote the rest of the ethnoracial

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analysis. In other words, "moyo" is not an exclusively "racial" category, because individuals who would be identified as "black" in Mexico or Honduras are *not*, therefore, "moyos." *Moyos, bolillos,* etc. are not transferrable categories, but rather refer specifically to African Americans and American whites specifically.

categorical question (Almaguer 2003: 216).[26] In doing so, they have overlooked a rich source of data on the everyday symbolic manifestations of intergroup relations and the role these play in the incorporation process, given how racialization is neither unilateral nor uninational (in the case of migrants). Attention to Latinos' self-identifications has mostly been limited to assessing the extent to which official pan-ethnic or pan-ethnoracial categories have been adopted (e.g. "Hispanic," "Other"), or the salience of such categories in Latinos' ethnoracial self-identifications versus national or sub-national identifications (Marrow 2011; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000). These are important foci, but because these studies tend to measure identification with official or formal categories, they miss the street-level dynamics by which group-based self- and other-understandings and categories are constructed, expressed, and contested, and the meanings these convey. It is these street-level dynamics which are most revealing about how groups see one another in the real life contexts through which they encounter one another.

Yet, perhaps "identities" is not the best way to think of what is being created through the uses and meanings of categorical signifiers that correspond to ethnoracial boundaries. After all, some critics argue that "identity" is made to mean too much, too little, or nothing at all by its excessive application (Brubaker & Cooper 2000). To these critics, "conceptualizing all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion, all self-understandings and self-identifications" as identity make it lose analytical power. Indeed, the sort of well-established groupness that identity implies is not quite what is suggested in Latina/o migrants' efforts to distinguish other groups, namely American blacks and whites, from themselves. Rather, the symbolic boundaries they communicate, partially informed

[26] Fittingly perhaps, linguists have undertaken fascinating studies of the emergence of "Hispanic" as ethnoracial construct, and on the variety, origins, and meanings of ethnonymy surrounding this U.S. group. Unfortunately, this research has not been sufficiently integrated into the contemporary race or immigration literatures (See Thomas M. Stephens 2003 for an excellent example).

by understandings they transport from their communities of origin, are tied to an *incipient* sense of their group position in the American context, anchored in the perception of their disadvantaged status in the workplace relative to other groups, yet still uncertain in the broader society. This uncertainty makes it critical to understand incorporation as a process, and relations between subordinate groups as prismatic engagement. The encounters between Latina/o migrants and African Americans on the line, operating in the shadows cast by whiteness, have everything to do with shaping the emergent racialized system of stratification in the twenty-first century United States.

Moyos, *Negros*, *Morenos*: The Language of Boundaries Between Latinos and African Americans on the Shop Floor at Swine's

In this section, I focus primarily on the ways in which Latina/o workers identify blacks, and secondarily on the ways in which blacks contribute to, make sense of, or challenge Latinos' identification of blacks. Largely absent from this account is a counter-analysis of the ways in which black workers identify Latinos, and the reason for this absence, itself a meaningful finding, is straightforward: African American workers rarely talked about Latino workers in ethnoracial terms. By this, I mean that African American workers were far less likely to verbalize characterizations of Latinos as a group (e.g. "Hispanics are lazy/Hispanics are hard workers"), to target Latinos as the source of their grievances (e.g. "Hispanics get preferential treatment/Hispanics are taking our jobs"), or even to refer to them casually in such terms (e.g. "Tell that Hispanic to throw the meat on the line correctly"). On the infrequent occasions when I heard black workers refer to Latinos in this way, this was usually in more or less neutral contexts, and the most common terms were Hispanic, Spanish, Mexican (often irrespective of national origin), and Honduras (without the 'n' and with an 's' instead), in roughly that order. Perhaps one could argue that in a department like Loin Boning and Packing, where out of

approximately 200 workers 75-80 percent were Latino, ethnoracial identification would clarify little about who was being talked about, which might account for why, for instance, casual references of the sort I mention above were less frequently made. But the same pattern held in the Marination department, where out of approximately 25 workers 80 percent were African American. In both departments, African American workers were far more likely to refer to individual Latinos using their name rather than any group-based form of identification, and they were far less likely to express a categorical distinction of any sort through ethnoracial identification of the group.

On the other hand, Latinos in both departments frequently referred to black workers, both individually and as a group, using terms of identification like *moyo*, *negro*, and *moreno* rather than their names, although this was more pronounced in the Loin Boning department. Ethnoracial identification of white workers was common as well. American whites, whether workers or supervisors, were usually referred to as *bolillos*, but because there were so few whites on the production floor, Latinos talked about them in any way far less frequently. Like other popular forms of identification, *bolillo* is a term which finds its origins among Mexican migrants. But unlike the meanings of *moyo*, which I will discuss in depth in this chapter, the meaning of *bolillo* – a loaf of bread - is hardly imbued with negative associations, and its usage seems to have an ostensibly neutral valence. And in a telling elision, white workers identified as *bolillos* might just as often be referred to as *americanos*, a conflation of ethnoracial and national origins forms of identification which rarely occurred for African Americans. I will discuss the significance of this last point in a later chapter.

Moreover, negative imagery associated with blackness did not have its counterpoint when it came to ethnoracial depictions of white workers. An older Salvadoran worker affectionately

referred to as "La Madrina" [the godmother] occasionally referred to individual black workers using more creative racialized slurs. For example, she had such a name for Janice, a middle-aged African American rib trimmer, who was generally despised by both Latina/o and African American workers for her selfish and sluggish work performance, but was usually avoided lest she unleash a cascade of anger in your direction. La Madrina referred to Janice, whose complexion was a deep brown, as "hígado quemado" [burnt liver]. Such vivid depictions were part of La Madrina's repertoire of spitfire. A ten-year veteran of the Loin Boning and Packing department, workers told story after story about how La Madrina had made a new hire break down in tears or explode in tantrums. In fact, I had my own such story. She was a fierce little old lady, and her age is probably the only reason nobody had punched her in the face. Rafael, a Honduran worker who had transferred to Swine's a year earlier after the company-owned plant he was working at several hours away closed down, confessed that he came close to doing so when he first started.[27]

Pejorative meanings were also attached to blacks as a group in departments where they were the majority rather than the minority. In the Marination Department, Latino/as sometimes used popular refrains to express these ideas, or simply stated some negative quality presumed to adhere to blacks. One evening, the line was stopped while the machine that vacuum sealed our seasoned meat products got fixed. I chatted with Lydia, an older South American worker, who was annoyed at all the mishaps we had been having that night as we tried to run our product. "Por eso es que no quiero tener un negro parado al lado mío, porque llegando o saliendo la

[27] When Marcos, a Chicano boning line worker, was given some off-line supervisory functions as a regular worker, and he approached La madrina's work station to bark orders about the work she was putting out, La madrina told him in no uncertain terms: "Listen *pendejo*, turn around and walk the other way because the next time you yell at me like that I'm going to give you the blow job of your lifetime [te voy a dar la mamada de tu vida]. And she didn't mean it would be a most pleasurable experience.

joden" [That's why I don't want a *negro* standing next to me, because coming or going they are going to mess up"]. This was a saying her mother often repeated, she tells me, and a refrain that is known throughout Latin America, including Brazil (Telles 2004).

On another night soon after this incident, my Marination coworkers and I were reworking pallets of pork chops that had been weighed and boxed incorrectly by the Pork Chop department. As per the instructions of Edrick, the Quality Assurance worker, we were to take each box off the pallet, open each box and weigh every pork chop, sorting them by weight and repacking them according to the correct weight range per pork chop for every box. Around the second or third pallet we work on, my coworkers begin to just weight the boxes instead of each pork chop. Our black crew leader, Clyde, had apparently told some workers to do the work this way, even though he hadn't explained this "shortcut" to all of us. When I look around and ask in frustration what is going on, Brandie pulls me aside to explain. Clyde, who is chatting idly with a QA supervisor, yells out "You don't got to explain anything to her. I do the explaining!" Looking over, I yell back "Except you don't, that's the problem!" Lydia tries to ask him what are we doing now, and I snap to her sarcastically "Don't ask any questions, don't ask questions if you don't understand!" and cursed him in Spanish. Later, we are back to weighing chops, when QA worker appears in our department. The work is suddenly stopped. Edrick, the QA worker, had pulled reworked boxes and found chops that were both under and over the weight specifications. Our supervisor, Joe, calls a huddle about this latest blunder, and Larissa, Lydia, and I protest that there was a whole pallet where workers were told to just weight the boxes. Who told us, Joe asked. "Clyde I guess," I said. Everybody was doing it." Lydia is fuming. "This *negro* is dumb. Like my mother used to say, when have you seen a smart *negro*?"[28]

[28] And not long after this incident, Lydia and Carmen were at my apartment drinking Coronas and tequila one night after work. We talked about whether I had told black workers of my research. Both thought it was a bad idea for me

The ways in which Latina workers identify blacks, individually and as a group, display subtle distinctions in meaning depending on context and tone, much as Vincent had grasped in the encounter that opens this chapter. But some patterns were clear. The three most common terms used to identify blacks were *moyos*, *negros*, and *morenos*, in roughly that order of frequency. Salvadorans seemed more likely than Hondurans or Mexicans to use the term *negro* interchangeably with *moyo*, and *moreno* was less likely to be used in purely inflammatory remarks about blacks. For example, although a statement to the effect of "*morenos* are treated better than hispanos" was not uncommon, I could not recall a single instance where this term appeared alongside negative descriptors targeting blacks, such as '*moreno desgraciado*.' On the other hand, phrases like '*la negra desgraciada*' or '*el moyo jodido*' [fucking *moyo*] were much more likely to appear conjunctively, suggesting that these identifications permit a broader range of pejorative meanings.

Sometimes Cristina referred to Thomas by his name, usually pronouncing it in English, but as often or more she referred to him as "el moyo" in negative contexts. Thomas frequently relied on Cristina to sharpen his knife, and after obliging she would turn to me and say "see, that fucking *moyo* has been here ten years and still doesn't know how to sharpen the knife." Or because Thomas had a habit of warming his hands in the tortuga's hot water stream, she complained that was all that *moyo* did all day. In the most sweeping of condemnations, Cristina points to Thomas and says "that *moyo* has made it ten years here because he doesn't work." Claudia operated the *tortuga* with Denise, a middle-aged black woman who had transferred from the Hamboning Department in June 2010. Claudia despised her and the two had frequent

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to reveal my research to our African American coworkers: "The *negros* are very traitorous in my experience," Carmen says. Lydia concurs: "En mi experiencia tambien." Carmen gives the example of Anita and Lydia of Brianna, two black coworkers whom they sometimes had run-ins with on the line.

blowups when they weren't doing their best to ignore each other. Each time Claudia recounted an incident with Denise, she called her "that moya pendeja" [dumbass *moya*] or "la negra hija de la gran puta." Sara told me of problems she was having with Angeline, an older black woman she worked with when she was sent to the little boning room sometimes, calling her "la negra desgraciada." Just recently, one Saturday about 13 months after I left the job at Swine's, I was sitting on the sofa with Sara at Claudia's house. I asked her how work had been that week, to which she replied caustically that it had been the same as always. I pressed her for specific information, saying "What do you mean the same? Something happens there every day." "Something happens like what? Hmm? Like what? Like that I got into a fight with a *negra desgraciada*?" Sara asks me provocatively. "Well, yes, for example," I replied. "Oh, well then yes, I got into a fight with a *negra desgraciada*," she said in her characteristically blunt, but also inappropriately comical, style.

An underlying usage of these terms is important not because it directly expresses a value-laden meaning, but because its seemingly neutral ubiquity is itself significant. Latina workers regularly foreground a worker's blackness by referring to him or her as "el moyo" or "la moya" rather than by his or her name. When Aisha, a young African American woman who started to work in Loin Boning packing ribs, would go on one of her frequent bathroom breaks, workers would ask about her whereabouts – "and the moya?" or because she was young "and the moyita?" Despite working alongside Denise at the *tortuga* for more than nine months, Claudia has never once referred to her by name, calling her instead "la moya" or "la negra," a tendency probably aggravated by her explosive relationship with this woman. Even after working with Thomas for close to two years, Cristina frequently referred to him casually as "el moyo." Even on one of the few occasions in which spontaneous positive assessments of a black worker were

expressed, their ethnoracial identification stood out. One afternoon, I was bagging ribs with Elsa, a Salvadoran woman who normally worked upstairs in the box room, and had moved out here from Dallas with her children after breaking up with her husband. As we chatted about her son wanting to go to college and her younger daughter not liking school, she spots Jeremy nearby and says to me in a tone of admiration "I love that *moyo*. That *moyo* is so nice."

My sense that the uses of *moyo*, and their frequency, were significant for understanding how Latina/os view African Americans, the group they are most likely to encounter in the workplace, was confirmed by Ileana, who spontaneously singled out this issue in discussing her unusual relations with African American co-workers. Ileana is related to Cristina's husband Ernesto, and was originally sponsored by friends in Virginia. She was brought to North Carolina by Ernesto's brother Julio when she couldn't find work, and now lives in a trailer with her new husband Jorge next to Cristina and Ernesto, in the same park as Julio, Heriberto, and several other brothers, and has worked at Swine's for almost 3 years. Recall that Ileana has an intimate relationship with Myrna, the Puerto Rican recruiter who she calls her mother and visits with frequently, even taking care of her when she was recuperating from surgery. It might seem strange that of all people, Ileana would have great affection for black Americans. But in fact, Ileana describes herself and is described by Latina co-workers as one of the only Latinas that gets along well with black co-workers.

Part of this may be due to the peculiarities of her personality – she is goofy, boisterous, and unpretentious. Her gender presentation is nonthreatening, as she does not wear makeup to work or engage in the sort of flirtatious behaviors with men as do many other women workers. But a significant part of her positive relations with African American workers is attributable to the fact that Ileana makes an effort to engage with black workers despite her very limited

English-speaking abilities, particularly through humor, playfulness, and camaraderie. She is cognizant of the fact that African American workers who know of the term tend to not like being referred to as *moyos*, and therefore avoids using the term, especially in their presence. Instead, she refers to African American workers by their names, contrasting herself to most Latina/o who she says usually refer to black workers as "el moyo/la moya." Further, she appears to give some validation to black workers who occasionally complain to her of other Latinos' attitude of looking down on them. Importantly then, Ileana's self-conscious avoidance of *moyo* is both reflective of her more positive understanding of black workers and constitutive of it. At the same time, Ileana understands workers like herself, besieged by the vulnerabilities of illegality, to be in the position of greatest disadvantage, a perception shared perhaps universally by Latina/o workers regardless of status, since the liabilities of illegality bleed onto *hispanos* as a group. The key distinction may be that Ileana sees her own tenuous position as inversely related to black Americans' position of relative privilege and advantage as *Americans* not as *blacks*, an important point I will return to in the next chapter.

> You know, the *negros* treat you better. Because I see eye to eye with most of the *negritos*. There are compañeros that are like "Ay no, Ileana. That Eileen [an older African American boning line worker] doesn't talk to anybody. But I see that with you…! And if it's the other one, Bess, or Susie. These people with us…" "But it's that you all don't give them an opening!" I say to them. The *morenitos* even go around giving me chewing gum, they say hello to me. This Fred, this Tyrese – "Hey, Ileana, hey!" And they go around saying hello to me. "I don't know, Ileana, how do you do to get along with the morenos?" [She is recounting what other Latinas say to her]. "It's that they are *a todo dar*. You all are the ones that don't give them an in." Because I have asked them [blacks], I've asked Bess. "Ay, [she makes a face]" that they [Latinos] have an ugly way about them. And I ask them [blacks] about me, and they say "good" [she gives a thumbs up]. They say Hispanos are very much like that, that they look at them like that [she makes a face]. Because Eileen told me the other day that Hispanos looked at her like that. And she even said to me, "I am American from this country!" They [African Americans] tell me that when I leave for Honduras they're going to come to my house, they're going to come visit me there in Honduras.

> Sandra says "The only one who gets along well with the *moyos* is Ileana." But they don't get along with them. I don't know why. They're good people, at least the ones I've dealt with at the plant. Imagine, they even bring me gifts. "Bess brought you a gift?! That old lady doesn't give to anybody!" [Again recounting what Latinas tell her]. And the other one too, Susie, she also gives me a Christmas present. She wanted to come to my house. When I had surgery, she also called me, even though I didn't understand too well. "Is okay, Ileana?" "Yes." I get along well with them. It's what I'm telling you, I've asked them and they say that Hispanos look down on them. I don't think so, I don't know. I've asked all of them, why don't they get along with the *morenitos*...They say they are racists. But then I ask them why, because even though I don't speak English I talk with them, sometimes I understand one word but nothing else. But I talk with them, even though I can't. But they feel, and I express to them, that I want to be their friend. And maybe the others don't. It's true, they give them mean nicknames. Sandra calls Bess "la huajolota" [the turkey]. And sometimes she understands because she's told me that she understands a little bit of Spanish. She says to me "Sandra widiwidi about me" – that Sandra is talking about her, she'll say to me. And I go "No," and she'll say "Yeah, yeah! Me Spanish poquito!" she says to me.
>
> So sometimes they [Latinos] will talk in front of them, and maybe they understand what they're saying. Because don't be fooled, from everything they hear they have to learn something, just like us. From talking with them so much, I've picked up a word here and there. And since they work among us, they have to learn something. But what happens is they pretend they don't understand to see what you say about them. That's why we say they're racists, but sometimes we don't try, we don't try to get to know people first. I get along well with all of them. There isn't a single *moreno* in the plant that doesn't get along well with me! If you don't try to mix with people you will never get along with them. But one day Sandra told Melinda: "That Ileana is a kiss-up". This is a theme for us Hondurans. Like that because they're from this country, I try to get along with them, to get something out of it.

Sitting in the living room of their *traila*, their dog Benji on my lap, Ileana's husband Jorge explains how blacks are typically referred to in Honduras, and how he came to learn about "moyos" and "bolillos."

> Over there [in Honduras] we called them *morenos*. That comes from Mexicans, saying "moyo" and "bolillo." *Morenos* don't like being called *moyo*.

Ileana expands on this explanation. She not only understands that African Americans do not like being referred to as *moyos*. She avoids using the designation, especially in their presence, and makes a point of referring to African American workers by name.

> "They don't like to be called *moyos*. I first heard that word here at the plant. But since I only call them by their names…"What's up, Fred?" "What's up, baby?" he says to me. Even if I can't pronounce it. To Tyrese I say "What's up, Taris?" He'll come over to me on the line and give me a high five. He'll look around to see if Jorge [her husband] is around" [laughing]. "To Harvey, I say 'Hey Harvey.' He's at the beginning of the line. He's worked there a long time. Elsa only refers to them like that [by *moyo*]."

Her husband Jorge adds "They just refer to them as *moyos*. Or *bolillo* if they're American." Ileana concurs "Horacio only talks about them like that - "That *moyo* araganisimo [super lazy]!" Jorge explains "Yes, because they don't like it when people tell them they're *moyos araganes* or lazy."

Ileana's sensitivity to the meanings of *moyo*, and how these are received by African Americans, can be contrasted to Claudia's aloofness to these issues. Like other Latinos, she said she first heard of "moyos" and "bolillos" upon arriving in North Carolina. When I asked her if these terms bothered those so designated, she was certain it did not.

> "No. Because among themselves they call each other that. Sometimes a *negro* will say to another: "That *moyo pendejo*." Or the *bolillos* will say: "That *bolillo pendejo*." Among themselves! I don't think it bothers them. It's a way of distinguishing them. That's what I think."

I inquired how she would respond if it did bother them. "I don't care. It doesn't matter to me. I'm not *moya* or *bolilla*. Why would it matter to me?" Claudia is under the impression that, since they sometimes banter with one another using these terms, African Americans (and whites) are not offended by these terms. Rather, it is a neutral category by which to identify people. But Claudia makes clear that if these terms *were* considered offensive, it would not matter to her. The contrasting understandings about "moyo" that Ileana and Claudia's comments demonstrate

suggest that the use of this designation for American blacks is neither merely neutrally referential nor only reflective of a pejorative view of African Americans. Rather, in using the term – or avoiding it, in Ileana's case – Latinos construct and embolden the boundaries they symbolically draw vis-à-vis African Americans.

LATINOS AND NATIVE-BORN WORKERS NAVIGATING THE ROCKY TERRAIN OF ETHNORACIAL IDENTIFICATION

Despite the ubiquity, sometimes neutrally portrayed, with which *moyo* appeared in Latino/a workers' designations of African American workers, and even its occasional application in expressions of affection for a particular African American worker, the negative valence attached to "moyo" on balance is captured in a story Vincent told me when I interviewed him a few months after the encounter that opens this chapter. In the encounter that opens the chapter, Vincent carefully explained the contexts that subtly determined the valence of "moyo." On this occasion, though, Vincent allows little interpretive ambiguity when he hears a Latino worker use the term. I asked Vincent whether he had ever experienced discrimination at work.

Vincent: I mean, at work, I don't really think it's too much because I don't socialize with a lot of people. I mean, I associate, speak or whatever. Me and Emilio call each other names...bad names (laughs).
Vanesa: Like what?
Vincent: I mean, I call him *joto* [faggot] all the time.
Vanesa: Oh yeah, that's right.
Vincent: I mean, something stupid. I don't call him, like, a racist name. He has slipped up a couple times and said – Emilio – talking about some *moyo*. You know *moyo*? He was talking about some *moyo* and shit like that. And I figured out what everything mean. 'Cause I mean, I work with a whole lot of Hispanic people and I'm always trying to learn something, so, if it's good or bad, I'm learning.[29] So, I mean, I decided I wanted to know what it mean. Told him one day, "Quit that shit. Don't be playing that. I know what that mean, motherfucker." So he cut that shit out though 'cause, I mean, I don't know if he was just being funny or whatever.

African Americans not only attempt to make sense of or contest the ways in which Latina/os identify them, as Vincent did, they also contribute to the repertoire Latina/os draw

[29] Recall that earlier, Cristina tells me Vincent had asked her to explain "moyo" to him, when he confronted her after she referred to "moyos" in his presence.

from. Gerardo, a scrawny 28 year old Honduran with shoulder-length curly hair, whose mother works on the kill floor and sister-in-law works in belly conversion, has the job of sorting ribs as they come down the line. He is a jovial and boisterous worker, howling like a wild animal for laughs and probably to keep himself awake, trading insults in jest with Alma, who weighs the ribs at a scale after Gerardo throws them up on another line. For a time, Jeremy, a rather well-built African American man in his late thirties from Wadeville, whose dream was to work for himself as a bar owner, worked near him trimming ribs. The two men developed a buddy relationship, joking with each other, and teaching each other work vocabulary in English and Spanish. Gerardo says they got along well, and after a while Jeremy began teaching him a different sort of vocabulary. Jeremy taught him the word "nigger," and the proper contexts within which to use the word. One day, Jeremy was standing in the way as Gerardo tried to reach a combo where he was piling ribs, so he shouted at him "*muévete de ahí nigger*" [move out of the way nigger]. Gerardo recounts that "the other *moyos*" – Thomas, Linda, and Vincent – were standing in the vicinity and all turned around at once and stared at him. For a moment, he was terrified they were going to pounce on him, but Jeremy quickly diffused the situation, saying "It's cool, we joke like that." Gerardo has a nuanced understanding of the significance of this designation, and of others – like "moyo."

> It's a disparaging word [nigger], that they used in the old days when they were slaves. But if you are with friends, or people you joke around with…So I had already joked with him several times. It's pretty harsh, for them it's a pretty harsh word. If you are in a place where there are *gente de color* [people of color] and you say "negro," they understand it. I imagine it [*moyo*] was a way of referring to them without them understanding that you are talking about them. Although now a majority of the *moyos* understands the word. Because there's a certain number of *gente hispana* that speaks Spanish and start mixing with personas de color, and that's how they find out.

Recall from the encounter that opens this chapter that Vincent suspects that Latinos avoid referring to blacks as "negros" because it might be misinterpreted by African Americans to mean

"nigger." Gerardo gives some support to this explanation, adding that at least initially "moyo" may have allowed Latinos to talk about African Americans in their presence without them knowing it. The implicit admission that such casual references were imperatively racialized is in stark contrast to the rarity with which African Americans referred to Latina/o workers in ethnoracial terms.

In fact, perhaps ironically it was a *white* worker, one of the few who worked at Swine's, who articulated the point I made at the beginning of this chapter about the much more muted ethnoracial identification of Latinos. Gerardo recounts a conversation with Kendra that made him consider this issue.

> Kendra says "You all call the *morenos* "moyos," us "bolillos," and what about you all? What do we call you?" At first I said to her "hispano." But she said no. She wanted a disparaging word, because they view *moyo* and *bolillo* as disparaging. So she said "wetback." Then I started to think about what she said, and I told her that phrase was not correct. Because that [wetback] is someone who is here illegally.

Gerardo seems to be trying to explain that, while a black American is always a *moyo* and a white American is always a *bolillo* – ethnonyms, a Latino is not always a *wetback* – a racialized term referring to (il)legal status. This is a crucial distinction, and one that suggests the flimsier basis for the ethnoracial identification of Latinos, for whom there is no category to parallel that of *moyo* or *bolillo*. And yet, disparaging or not, the experiences that bring together Latin American migrants from diverse national contexts at Swine's as *hispanos* is an important part of the story I tell here.

CONCLUSION

If, as I have defined it, incorporation is a process of mutual adjustment by which groups both achieve and are ascribed social positions in a stratified system of belonging, then how groups negotiate identifications in relation to one another is in some measure a reflection of how

they create and manage group boundaries that give meaningful symbolic expression to consequential social distinctions. I have argued that social relations between subordinate groups are usefully thought of as prismatic engagement. An important point at which to begin to understand incorporation, then, is to shed light on the categories, uses, and meanings through which a group identifies another with which it is articulated in some socially significant way, that is, in some way that has a bearing on, or is reflective of, these groups' relative positions in a stratified system of belonging. Such groups do not encounter one another in empty social space. Rather, Latino/a migrants and African Americans - the native-born workers with whom they most overlap in the workplace - encounter one another in a system of racialized structure and meaning that may involve several different points of reference across and within national boundaries, but which refracts their relationships through a single prism: white dominance.

Latin American ethnoracial panoramas that I consider briefly in this chapter prefigure some of the variation in the language of Latinos/migrants in the U.S., and the degree to which blacks are negatively racialized. Yet, while these historical contexts precondition Latino migrants' characterization of blacks in the U.S., and support the notion of a global devaluation of blackness, it is their encounters with African Americans on the line, and their lessons in racialization schemes developed in the American context, that actually define the parameters of the social field in which group boundaries are shaped. It is in this sense that such boundaries demarcate a transnational field of ethnoracial signification in which blackness, universally devalued, can come to be viewed by Latinos as a privileged status at the micro-level of the American workplace.

Rightfully skeptical that relatively recent Latino/a migrants to the U.S. South have acquired their views about American blacks directly from whites, researchers have proposed that

migrants more or less bring such views with them from their origin countries. But not having studied in any depth the features of the most important social domain in which Latinos and African Americans encounter one another in the American South – the workplace – these scholars neglect a critical sphere in which these intergroup relations are molded. Without a doubt, migrants from all over Latin America come to the U.S. with a lifetime's worth of schooling in the racial systems of their origin communities. And while there are important differences in the various Latin American schemas and the American racialization system, there is one feature they crucially hold in common. That feature is the universal devaluation of blackness. Most of the Latino/a migrants at Swine's did not self-identify as black, were not identified as such by others in their origin communities, nor were identified as such by others here in the U.S. Instead, their re-racialization in the U.S. refers to the (ethno)racialization of diverse migrants from Latin America as *hispanos*.

Scholars have studied the formation of group consciousness by measuring either rates of self-identification with putative group labels (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000) or rates of reported feelings of commonality with other members of such putative groups (Sanchez 2008). For example, some scholars have studied Latino group consciousness by measuring rates of self-identification of individuals from diverse Latin American origins with various pan-ethnic group labels (e.g. Hispanic, Latino). Other scholars have studied Latino group consciousness by measuring feelings of commonality or closeness reported by individuals from diverse national origins with other Latin American-origin groups (e.g. People from [Honduras] have a lot in common with [Mexicans]). Drawing on Michael Dawson's (1994) seminal study of African American political attitudes, Sanchez and Masuoka (2010) argue for measuring Latino group consciousness according to how much putative group members feel that their individual fortunes,

as well as the fortunes of their own national origin group, is contingent on the fortunes of Latinos more generally. In other words, according to these scholars, to be a meaningful category of analysis and action, "Latino group consciousness" should be a gauge of the degree to which putative group members feel their own fates are linked with the fate of "Latinos," and to some extent dependent on the fate of the group. I argue that the strong identification of "moyos" has its corollary in the ontological status inhabited by Hispanos.

At Swine's, self-identification by putative group members as 'hispanos,' I argue, was suggestive of all three processes. When Latina/o workers at Swine's talked about "hispanos," this reflected the increasing adoption of this panethnic label for purposes of self-identification and a progressive feeling of closeness or commonality with other putative group members given the imposition of conditions that tended to suppress national differences among Latinos, but also ripening certainty that one's individual fortune was tied to the fate of the group. This will become clear in the chapters that follow, where I delve into the social boundaries between Latino/a migrants and African American workers at Swine's. In the next chapter, I offer an explanation for the bold symbolic boundaries that Latinos draw vis-à-vis their African American coworkers at Swine's – an account that carefully considers Latinos' perceptions about the position they occupy in the most crucial social domain of their lives in North Carolina – the workplace.

CHAPTER 4

PAINTED BLACK: OPPRESSIVE EXPLOITATION AND RACIALIZED RESENTMENT

I was working at the table with Cristina, carrying piles of rib racks from the pan to the table for her to trim, bagging the trimmed extra-meaty ribs, and throwing these back on the line to be sealed and packed in boxes when she suddenly announced "Tomorrow I'm going to come painted black so I don't have to work!" I chuckled nervously and busied myself stacking more ribs on the table. I noticed two African American workers, Jeremy and Adrienne, at the table talking to her and quickly gathered that she had repeated this comment directly to them. Jeremy gave her a sideways look from behind his round, wire-rimmed glasses, eyeballing her with displeasure and suspicion. He walked by and she smiled, calling him over. She said to me ""He's lazy [haragán]. And when he worked on the knife he was lazy" He walked past the table and said "You're mean. I'm gonna take you to HR 'cause you're prejudiced. You have prejudices." Cristina asked me what that meant and I translated. She smiled and kept working, all the while trying to get Jeremy's attention.

After a short pause, Cristina turned to me and asked "What's that? What you said before." "Prejuicio?" "Yeah, what's that?" "It's like…racist ideas," I explained in Spanish. "No" she said shaking her head, adding that she didn't think 'they' were all like that. As if to further explain herself, she added that when they labored alongside one another at the ribs station "I showed him how to work with the knife, and he would teach me words in English." A while later I noticed Coreen, an African American woman in her thirties who normally worked bagging small hams at the end of the ham-end boning line, throwing bagged meat on the line and Adrienne was telling her what Cristina said. Coreen proceeded to eyeball Cristina. Pretending I didn't know what was going on, I asked Coreen what was wrong. "Nothing, just what this woman said, that she was going to come to work painted black so she didn't have to work." I asked her what she had responded and she said "Nothing." Shortly after, I spotted a group of black workers including Jeremy chatting, probably about Cristina's comments. Later that day, Cristina, apparently impervious and still trying to get Jeremy's attention, told him excitedly that she wanted to show him videos of blacks - Garifunas - in Honduras dancing *punta*. Feeling embarrassed, I translated this, and Jeremy just nodded.

Perhaps the confluence of contempt, fondness, and obliviousness in this encounter between Cristina and African American workers represents a certain ambiguity resulting from the diverse sources Latina/os draw from to articulate boundaries with African Americans, as I showed in Chapter Three. Yet, the unmistakable impression that emerges from the thrust of Cristina's comments to Jeremy, and which was issued repeatedly by Latina/o workers, is that African Americans occupy a privileged position in the workplace. This perception is inextricable from Latina/o migrants' sense that they are the most oppressively exploited workers at the factory. Latina workers see African Americans as having advantages that are beyond their reach, and which relate to three dimensions of the labor process. First, African American workers are seen as being more likely to be assigned less strenuous jobs. Second, they are felt to be domineering, delighting in the humiliation of Latino workers. Third, African American workers are thought to be subject to a less punitive labor discipline regime.[30]

In the first section of this chapter, I outline key issues in the literature on the economic incorporation of migrants and the social relations between migrants and native-born workers in labor markets. I specifically discuss research that has developed around Blumer's "sense of group position" model, and highlight studies of Latina/o migrant incorporation in the American South that advance this framework. Following my review of the limitations of research to date, in the second section I delve into the substance of my argument. I expose the character of social relations between workers, showing how the symbolic boundaries Latina/os express are rooted in their perception that they are the most oppressively exploited workers and that African Americans occupy a privileged place within the social organization of labor. In the third section, I demonstrate that within the context of oppressive exploitation at Swine's, the sharp symbolic

[30] Stuesse (2009) has noted similar perceptions among Latinos working in Mississippi poultry plants.

boundaries that Latinos draw against their African American coworkers is linked to their conviction that African Americans occupy an advantaged position in the workplace. Because white workers are scarce, and because blackness is a universally devalued status, this grievance is translated into a resentment that is racialized.[31]

LATINA/O MIGRANTS' INCORPORATION INTO A STRATIFIED SYSTEM OF BELONGING

U.S. immigration scholarship has focused extensively on assessing the economic consequences of immigration, in particular, on the question of whether immigrants hurt native-born workers, especially blacks, and whether economic competition results in conflict between the groups.[32] Scholars who have studied African American attitudes towards Latinos have found them to hold negative and hostile views of Latinos, and have argued that this is rooted in economic competition (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). However, much of the concern could be deferred, it was thought, as long as Latino/a migrants and African Americans didn't tend to overlap in space (Smith and Edmonston 1997; but see Hammermesh and Bean 1999). But with the move to nontraditional destinations in the South, where African Americans are concentrated, scholars' preoccupation with intergroup relations has steadily gained traction (McClain et al 2006).

In general, and depending on the emphasis given, the ethnic succession perspective has tended to view the situation of compositional shifts as involving replacement as opposed to

[31] Throughout the chapter, in referring to "racialization" I favor DeGenova's (2005: 2) definition: "the dynamic processes by which the meanings and distinctions attributed to "race" come to be *produced* and continually reproduced, and more important, are always entangled in social relations and conflicts, and thus retain an enduring significance because their specific forms and substantive meanings are eminently historical and mutable."

[32] This field of study includes what DeGenova (2005) would call the liberal nativist wing of immigration scholarship, applying a literal denotation of "nativism" to mean the presumption of primacy of the interests of the native-born. But this is perhaps an oversimplification, since frameworks for understanding intergroup relations have long noted the importance of competition over resources as a condition for the presence or absence of conflict.

displacement, but I have already argued in Chapter Two that both processes, along with growth in this case, are likely to co-occur. Intergroup processes, as I have argued, are the critical means through which Latino/a migrants become incorporated in a stratified system of belonging; in a more proximate sense, intergroup relational dynamics are key to understanding how Latino/a migrants gain a sense of group position. In short, the ethnic succession model carries the assumption that when workforce composition is affected by replacement dynamics, intergroup conflict should be minimized, while intergroup conflict should be heightened by displacement dynamics. Although this is a plausible hypothesis, convincing tests of this proposition have not been undertaken.[33] More troubling, very little research has produced data based on direct observation of workplace intergroup dynamics. In this chapter, I address this void.

Recently, a number of scholars have turned to Blumer's (1958) "sense of group position" concept to explain how the perception of threat from an out-group causes in-group members to react with prejudice towards members of that group. While scholars have usefully drawn on Blumer's concept to incorporate a diversity of threats – economic, political, and cultural – that bear on intergroup relations, and to emphasize that *perceptions* of threat may be as important as "real" threats, more must be done to contextualize these threats and to consider the possible bases of such threats. I argue that our understanding of the mechanisms and conditions - the dynamic processes - that produce this sense of group position is underdeveloped, and that a boundaries approach inspired by Barth's (1969) seminal work allows us to arrive at a richer understanding of the collective process that shapes a group's sense of their position within the

[33] Even before such a relationship between the dynamics of workplace compositional shifts and intergroup relations can be tested, whether compositional shifts are attributable to displacement or replacement dynamics must be empirically established first. Usually, though, scholars assume that or the other dynamic is at work by either drawing on indirect suggestive indicators or by employing reverse logic that confirms their assumptions (i.e. if there is conflict in intergroup relations, then there displacement is at work, and if there is not, then this shows replacement is at work). Obviously, these are complicated issues, some of which I tease apart in another article (with Ted Mouw).

American stratified system of belonging. To be useful, this approach must be situated within contexts that meaningfully condition patterns of intergroup relations – such as the workplace – and must be attentive to the relationship between symbolic boundaries and the real or perceived social distinctions that underlie them, and which are reinforced or challenged by them.

The "Sense of Group Position:" Origins and Development of a Concept

When Herbert Blumer (1958) proposed viewing "race prejudice as a sense of group position," he went against the prevailing view of prejudice as inhering in individuals' feelings of hostility, intolerance, and aggressiveness. Instead, prejudice was the result of a collective process of group representation whereby members of a dominant group construct definitions of a subordinate group in ways that affirm the dominant group's superiority, the subordinate group's essential difference, the dominant group's rightful claim to privilege, and their sensitivity to feelings of threat from the subordinate group. This view of prejudice, or perhaps conflict more broadly, has developed as a middle ground between the rational economic conflict models (Borjas 1998; Burns and Gimpel 2000) and the more social psychological models of prejudice (cite).

Numerous studies have attempted to bridge threat-based explanations for prejudice against, as well as among, ethnoracial and religious minorities and immigrants (Berg 2009; King and Weiner 2007; Dixon 2006; Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz 2005; McLaren 2003; Oliver and Wong 2003; Taylor 1998; Wagner, Pettigrew, Stellmacher, and Wolf 1998). Although Blumer's concept referred to the spatial (i.e. positional) relationship between dominant and subordinate groups, and the mechanism that produced dominant group prejudice toward subordinate groups (i.e. perceived threats to their position), scholars since have extended his group position approach to the study of intergroup relations and prejudice among subordinate groups (Bobo and

Hutchings 1996) and within class-stratified contexts (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). A critical contribution of Bobo and Hutchings' (1996: 956) work is the concept of "racial alienation," which they developed as a measure of the degree to which group members feel enfranchised or aggrieved. They theorize that greater racial subordination results in greater racial alienation, which in turn is reflected in a heightened perception of competitive threats from other groups.

Waldinger and Lichter (2003) extend the study of prejudice both across class lines and among subordinate groups. They show how prejudice is context-dependent, such that employers may dislike a group but prefer them for certain jobs. For example, across low-wage workplaces, (white) employers seeking workers who will make the best subordinates see native-born whites as the ultimate in-group, blacks as an in-group to the extent that they share the same view of the proper equation between effort and reward but an out-group as disliked racial subordinates, and Latino migrants as an out-group in both senses - and therefore preferred on this basis. Waldinger and Lichter incorporate Bobo and Hutchings' concept of "racial alienation" in their expanded, situational understanding of prejudice to explain the contentious relationship between in-groups and out-groups at work. According to these scholars, native-born groups, particularly those who experience greater "racial alienation" (i.e. African Americans) are likely to feel that immigrants pose a competitive threat to their sense of group position.

An unnecessary limitation to the explanatory power of the "racial alienation" concept has been its narrow construction to the case of African Americans. Because it has been so directly tailored to fit the historical experience of African Americans as the quintessentially racially subordinated, and therefore most racially alienated, group in the U.S., it becomes difficult to imagine that another group can perceive itself to be the most deprived. And because economic competition has generally been viewed as the precipitating factor that leads a group to feel their

sense of group position threatened, other sources of grievance have not been adequately explored. The importance of loosening the analytical constraints on the "racial alienation" concept, and redirecting attention to sources of grievance or deprivation other than direct economic competition, will become evident as I present my data and findings on relations between Latinos and African Americans at Swine's. The racialization of Latino/as in the contemporary South is a recursive process of group formation, as *hispanos* develop an understanding of themselves as an aggrieved identity, deprived relative to what they see as African Americans' privileged status at work.

The "sense of group position" approach, unlike the predictions of Waldinger's ethnic succesion model, grants as much causal force to the *perception* of threat as to the actual conditions of niche overlap that would likely produce competition and conflict between groups. In their study of low wage jobs in Los Angeles, Waldinger and Lichter find evidence of interethnic workplace conflict, particularly in workplaces where immigrants are at a numerical advantage, which they argue is suggestive of competition, but conclude nevertheless that "the degree of tension falls below the level to be expected had blacks perceived themselves as being displaced."[34] Waldinger and Lichter seem reluctant to conclude that blacks are in competition with Latino migrants for low-wage jobs or to consider that the conflict they observe is not rooted in the attitudes and behaviors of African Americans. They also neglect the possibility that interethnic workplace conflict can have something other than competition as its source.[35] Of

[34] Employing the less-than-ideal reverse logic laden with assumptions I identified earlier, they interpret their evidence, drawn from interviews with Los Angeles employers, as more suggestive of ethnic succession through replacement than displacement.

[35] Other variants of threat-based explanations of prejudice emphasize aggregate-level compositional factors, such as the size of the minority group, economic conditions, and niche overlap (Quillian 1995, drawing on Blalock 1967; Olzak 1992, drawing on a strand of Barth's work).

course, intergroup relations are a major concern of scholars who study Latina/o migrants' social and economic incorporation in new and maturing destinations.

"New" Destinations and Intergroup Relations

Latino migration to nontraditional destinations has produced a wealth of volumes documenting the unprecedented transformation of the American heartland and bible belt regions (Anrig, Wang, and McClain 2006; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005; Arreola 2004; Sills 2011; Hill and Beaver 1998; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995; Gozdziak and Martin 2005; Hamamoto and Torres 1997; Jones 2008; Johnson-Webb 2003; Odem and Lacy 2009; Murphy 2001; Mantero 2008; Massey 2008; Murphy, Blanchard and Hill 2008; Holloway 2008; Peacock, Watson, and Matthews 2005; Smith and Furuseth 2006; Gill 2010). The vast majority of research on Latino/a migration to the U.S. South consists of case studies of particular localities, often painting a broad-strokes portrait of small-town demographic and economic restructuring that highlights the significant contribution Latino/a migrants have made to the agroindustrial labor force. This growing literature has addressed the "challenges" that such changes pose for places with little to no collective memory of immigration, and reveals an undercurrent of concern over the de-stabilization of long-standing binary intergroup relations and the ongoing configuration of a new, more complex system of intergroup relations now featuring whites, African Americans, and Latinos.

Some scholars have focused their attention on intergroup relations at work as well as in the broader community, and the issue of conflict between Latino/a migrants and native-born non-Latinos, especially African Americans. Studying the rural Delmarva Peninsula, Dunn, Aragonés, and Shivers (2005) document the growth of the Latino workforce in poultry between 1987 and the late 1990s, at which point about half of the workforce was immigrant, mostly Mexican and

Guatemalan. Latinos played a big role in union revitalization in one Selbyville plant, where until they staged a wildcat strike as a result of an injury-related firing, Latinos generally had no idea of the union presence, and the lone steward – an African American woman – apparently did not seek to engage them. The UFCW decided to support the workers' strike, and as a result the union was revitalized in the plant. The number of stewards reached 15 by 2001, fourteen of whom were Latinos, at the plant of close to 1,000 workers. According to the Latina woman by this time elected VP of the union local, the incident brought African American and Latino workers together.

Discussing African American-Latino relations, these scholars find no apparent large-scale tensions, but some friction. They note that some workplace tensions are instigated by management, who let workers know they think Latinos are the better workers. In the community, blacks begin to feel neglected by social services agencies. Dunn, Aragonés, and Shivers (2005: 180) also mention "public expressions of hostility" that drew public outcry, such as the comments by the Bridgeville, Delaware mayor at a mostly pro-immigrant conference that "Those people need to learn English!" and those of the Georgetown, Delaware mayor that Guatemalan and Mexican immigrants were "lowering the region's standard of living."[36] As to the future of race relations, these authors conclude that "On the one hand, if things play out as a zero-sum competition among subordinated groups, then there will likely be increased hostility, especially between African Americans and Latinos…On the other hand, the increasing interest among local actors in cultural exchange with Mexican and Latino immigrants should help improve interethnic relations." Immigrant activism will likely develop further as well, and they believe this will "contribute constructively to interethnic relations."

[36] Interestingly, though the authors are silent about the race of the perpetrators, it is implicit that they are white (177).

Kandel and Parrado (2004) share a similar "guarded optimism" about the prospects for Latino migrants' incorporation in the rural South, based on their case studies of poultry workers in Duplin County, North Carolina and Accomack County, Virginia. These researchers recount that in September 2000, Latino workers at Carolina Turkeys, the largest turkey processing plant in the U.S., held an "international festival," and later during the Semana de la Hispanicidad in 2001, Latin American country flags were exhibited in the company hallways. According to Kandel and Parrado (2004: 274), "[f]ollowing their lead, black employees decided to celebrate African-American Week in January 2002." Unfortunately, aside from noting these rather superficial events, the authors do not examine what their significance was beyond the implicit assumption that both groups merely took the opportunity to express their ethnic pride. According to Kandel and Parrado, "[n]one of the informants…suggested that the growth of the Hispanic population had caused concern among community residents," but later they note that some mentioned hearing about job competition between Latino migrants and local blacks, as well as concern over fake drivers' licenses, and access-to-housing issues, while Latinos were concerned with being crime targets.

Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2005) examine the demographic transformation of Dalton, Georgia, carpet capital of the world. Earlier in the 20th century, the exclusion of blacks from mills led to their northern migration and black population decline. Industrial development created a stark two-class community united by race, in this case their shared whiteness. Explaining the growth of the Latino population in Dalton, the authors note that initially, workers were recruited in South Texas for poultry processing and by 1997 the local ConAgra poultry plant was 80% Latino. In the early 1990s, carpet manufacturers sent recruiters to south Texas,

and later advertised in Spanish media and on town billboards. Many migrants in Dalton came from traditional urban destinations or from farmworker camps in Florida.

Among community-level changes they note are the growing use of Spanish in public spaces and growing Catholic presence. These authors gently critique past studies for attending almost exclusively to conflict, competition, and tension, an excessive focus they see as problematic. In addition, they critique the emphasis on dramatic events as opposed to examining less dramatic social interactions in everyday life, and what they see as the lack of attention to intragroup differences, particularly with respect to class (esp. among whites) (See also Griffith 2008; Marrow 2011). Yet, despite throwing in vague examples of positive interaction (e.g. black and Latino co-workers "fraternizing" in carpet mills; more mixed marriages), these are not well-developed and do not appear especially salient. In contrast, their discussion of conflictive situations was more prominent. A long-term Mexican worker complained about how newcomers in the early 1990s were rate-busters, and this animosity was shared by white and black workers. Where white workers used to switch jobs across plants routinely, these labor market strategies could not be sustained in the face of abundant inflows of Latino labor.[37] In addition to a pattern of separate coexistence in public spaces, black lower-middle class respondents were upset about the "takeover" of public and semi-public spaces. Though they lauded the entrepreneurialism and social capital of Latino migrants, they also conveyed a sense that whites were "catering to Latinos" in a way that no one had ever assisted black Daltonians. At the same time, given the

[37] This is an interesting aside to Waldinger and Lichter's explanations for why network recruitment aids immigrants in achieving niches through replacement, and supports my argument in Chapter Two about the difficulty of untangling replacement-displacement dynamics.

small local black population, itself heterogeneous, some black leaders have viewed coalition-building as a way to give blacks some power.[38]

Another example is the case of Siler City, North Carolina, which experienced what appeared to some locals an 'overnight' transformation of the demographic make-up of their community. The negative response of many whites to Latinos, whom they had thought were just "the Mexicans" passing through, was difficult to miss. Recruited by poultry processing plants in the area, the Latino population in Siler City swelled between 1990 and 2000, from less than two hundred to more than three thousand. Alarmed at these changes, Siler City formed a "Hispanic Task Force" that included no Latinos and which produced a pamphlet warning Latinos that keeping chickens in town limits and wife-beating were against the law. Further, the Democratic County Commissioner submitted a letter to the INS in August 1999 requesting federal intervention to assist the town in dealing with "the problem."[39] The letter set off fear among migrants, who sensed that a backlash was to follow, and perhaps even a round of INS raids. What did follow was a rally sponsored by a local self-identified "Aryan" at which David Duke, the former Klan leader, was the headline speaker. Though the rally was well-attended (estimates are about 300 supporters and another 100 onlookers), the obvious associations with publicly-identified white supremacists gave pause to many white residents about the heightened animosity directed at Latino migrants. At the same time, the county commissioner responsible for the letter

[38] In the mid-1990s, an organization called Citizens Against Illegals formed and organized demonstrations with the Ku Klux Klan. Around the same time, a series of carpet mill raids were conducted via Operation SouthPAW and an INS office was established with the support of local government. Anti-immigrant and anti-Latino letters to the editor flooded the local newspaper, but then the newspaper shut this down and local industrialists "began to articulate a public discourse recognizing the importance of immigrants and their various contributions to the region" (265). The authors seem to recognize the self-serving ends to which this was directed: "by extolling the virtues of immigrants, the industrial elite seemed to undermine all other workers that were not like them" (265). This, in turn, brought forth the class divisions among whites (266).

[39] Though Striffler (2005) does not specify this, it is implicit that the members of this task force, and the county commissioner in question, are all white.

to the INS went on a trip to Mexico sponsored by UNC's Center for International Understanding and returned promising to set aside his incessant focus on questions of migrant illegality and focus instead on integration issues (Striffler 2005; Cuadros 2007). African American churches made efforts to reach out to Latinos, the Duke rally not sitting well with blacks, no matter what the intergroup tensions in the community were (Silver 2011).

Helen Marrow's work (2011; 2007) is the most comprehensive analysis of Latino migrant incorporation in the South and the status of intergroup relations in the region to date. Based primarily on interviews with native-born and foreign-born Latinos as well as native-born white and African American workers and managers across several industries as well as public institutional actors, Marrow (2007) evaluates several competing theories that seek to explain African American-Latino relations. Distinguishing between what she refers to as personal (See Borjas 1998) and group (See Burns and Gimpel 2000) economic interest models and the group position model derived from Blumer (See Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Bobo and Johnson 2000; Morawska 2001), Marrow explores several hypotheses about the relationships between whites, African Americans, and Latinos, while taking account of the relative sizes of groups at the county level.[40]

According to Marrow, Latino migrants experience greater discrimination from blacks than whites, and she explains this using a group position model, since blacks are mostly at the bottom of the social class structure, while whites are generally split between working and middle class. African Americans, facing threats to their sense of group position react in an exclusionary fashion towards Latino/a migrants. Marrow (2007; 2011) builds on Kim's (1999) racial

[40] Marrow (2007: 223) proposes several hypotheses regarding the effects of black population size. First, a higher proportion of blacks may reduce tensions because sense of threat will be mitigated by "strength in numbers" and this in turn may provide more opportunities for contact (implying cooperation). Second, a higher proportion of blacks will intensify tensions because of more opportunities for contact (implying competition and conflict).

triangulation theory, which posits that Asian Americans occupy dual places within the "field of racial positions" that is overdetermined by white hegemony, as valorized insiders relative to blacks but as civic outsiders perpetually estranged as foreigners. She argues that (2007: 30) "Hispanic newcomers experience discrimination and exclusion not just along one vertical skin color axis along which white natives can mark them as racially inferior, but also along a separate horizontal (non)citizenship axis along which both white and black natives can mark and ostracize them as undeserving civic and cultural "outsiders."" She says this axis is experienced most strongly, and that blacks are seen as its "worst perpetrators." [41] Furthermore, this intergroup dynamic is even more pronounced in areas with higher African American population levels - majority black "Bedford" county has more tense intergroup relations than majority white "Wilcox," even though Latinos constitute a much larger minority in the latter.[42] These findings illustrate the importance of citizenship issues and class structure to understanding intergroup relations and the shifting color line. According to Marrow (2007: 30), it focuses on the role of African Americans in excluding Hispanics, and "helping to speed up Hispanic newcomers' incorporation into "mainstream" rural Southern society as "nonblacks." Given her findings, she argues tentatively for an emerging black-nonblack divide in the U.S.

[41] See also Marrow (2011: 149-154). Like Marrow's respondents, Griffith (2005) cites turkey and meatpacking workers around Newton Grove who claimed that "African Americans were the most unfriendly toward them and the most likely to treat them with disrespect" (66). See also Striffler (2005) for similar comments from Latinos in Arkansas.

[42] This is a paradox Marrow does not adequately explain. Conflict models typically postulate one group as an incumbent, and another as an incoming, potentially threatening group. While the relative size of the groups is important, it is assumed that the size and rate of growth of the *incoming*, potentially threatening group is of crucial importance. In contrast, Marrow assumes that the size of the *incumbent* group – African Americans – is the variable of importance, not the size of the incoming, potentially threatening group – Latinos. Her findings that Latino-African American relations are less conflictive in the county with a higher Latino population, and more conflictive in the county with a smaller Latino population, and a majority African American population, run counter to the expectations of conflict models where the variable of importance for gauging African American response is assumed to be the size and rate of growth of the Latino population.

Despite the interest scholars have shown in the potential for large-scale Latino migration to the U.S. South to multiply the complexity of race relations in the region, there have so far been few studies that examine the racialization process as a historically-conditioned, context-dependent phenomenon. Studies of migrant incorporation in nontraditional destinations that engage with "race" seem especially concerned with a set of narrowly defined questions. One such question is whether Latino migrants and native-born groups (typically whites and blacks, but usually the latter) experience conditions of competition and perhaps conflict. In particular, studies ask whether Latino migrants experience exclusion or racial discrimination and by whom. These questions correspond roughly to a broader agenda to study how migrants are socially and economically incorporated in nontraditional receiving communities in the South and Midwest. These are important questions, but studies that address these questions have been conducted in such a way that unnecessarily limits our scope of understanding.

A critical limitation across much of the literature on migrant incorporation and intergroup relations in the U.S. South – even that which extends Blumer's group position model – is its inability to adequately account for relations among subordinate groups. With respect to relations between African Americans and Latino/a migrants, scholars have tended to focus on one dimension of the relationship – African Americans' attitudes and behavior towards Latino migrants. But from an incorporation perspective as I have defined it, Latino/a migrants' understandings about African Americans take on an equal significance. There is little agency for Latinos in models that focus primarily on African Americans' attitudes and behavior towards Latinos. Worse, in attributing attitudes and behaviors to African Americans when these are reported by Latinos, African Americans' agency is also circumscribed and misrepresented.

Marrow's research illustrates this limitation in a number of ways. First, most of the data on which her conclusions are based pertain to interviews with Latino respondents embedded in a variety of arenas. This methodology yields rich data for gauging the perceptions of Latinos across a broad range of social situations and spaces. However, it is important to distinguish between *a claim about Latinos' perceptions*, whatever the objective conditions that produce these perceptions, and *a claim about the fact of African Americans' role* in essentially pushing Latinos' to embrace a position closer to whites by displaying exclusionary attitudes and behaviors towards Latinos because they feel threatened. A second problem, related to the first, is that Marrow seems to underestimate the built-in incentives Latinos have - and were likely well aware of before arriving – to distance themselves from blacks or other highly stigmatized groups, and to identify with whites, or at least view them more favorably. It has been demonstrated that immigrant groups may "overlook" the slights and injustices perpetrated by dominant groups, while exaggerating those of their competitors/inferiors (see Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). I have shown in Chapter Three that Latinos are predisposed to view blackness as a subordinate status given the ethnoracial meaning systems in their origin communities. More importantly, as I will show in this chapter, by situating the analysis of intergroup relations in the crucial domain of the workplace, it becomes clear that Latinos have strong reasons for representing blacks in a negative light. In the end, Marrow's conclusions are just as plausibly a reflection of Latino/a migrants' negative projections about African Americans through which they articulate and reinforce social boundaries, as they are an indication that African Americans feel their group position threatened and therefore display an exclusionary posture towards Latinos.[43]

[43] While Marrow (2007) buttresses her findings in McClain's (2006) preliminary review of 2003 Durham Survey data that suggests blacks are more "concerned" about immigration than whites (14-16), McClain also reviews a 1996 survey (cited in Johnson, Johnson-Webb, and Farrell 1999) that showed fewer blacks held negative views about Latinos. Surveys conducted by Elon in 2006 showed heightened "concern" with Latino immigration, with large

A second critical limitation across much of the literature concerns the fact that intergroup relations are considered in mostly dyadic, as opposed to multiplex, fashion. In other words, this involves insufficient attention to how Latino-African American relations may be mediated by whiteness, or may implicate whiteness – despite the fact that whites themselves may have a minimal, if important, presence in contexts where African Americans and Latinos interact. This limitation is related to the tendency among scholars to assume that the most salient aspect of the potential reconstitution of systems of race relations has to do with the relationship between Latinos/migrants and African Americans. This focus is understandable and in some ways warranted, since until relatively recently Latino migrants and African Americans generally did not live in the same places and therefore were less likely to experience niche overlap leading perhaps to competition and conflict (Smith and Edmonston 1997, 223; but see Hammermesh and Bean 1998 and Bean and Bell-Rose 1999, who dispute the NAS interpretation) but I argue it is problematic for two reasons especially.[44]

On the one hand, the sharp emphasis given to conflict between African Americans and Latinos is rarely situated in concrete contexts of interactions like particular workplaces or

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majorities citing services used, law-breaking, nonpayment of taxes, and smaller majorities citing jobs being taken away and belief that most Latino immigrants in N.C. illegally. But at the time of her writing, the Elon data had not been broken down by race. Subsequently, McClain et al (2006) presented a far different picture that emerged from the full data: Latinos view African American far more negatively than African Americans see them, and view whites more favorably than whites view them. In sum, given that much of Marrow's own interview data is restricted to Latinos (14 out of 129 interviews were with African Americans and 27 with whites), and that survey data on individual attitudes is not unambiguous, a more tentative conclusion is warranted. Finally, as Marrow acknowledges even as she argues that conflict between African Americans and Latinos is more pronounced in neighborhoods and schools than in workplaces (248), "a more thorough and nuanced understanding of intergroup relations in large, low-wage industries" is needed (115). Specifically, I would add that such studies should examine relations at the level of particular workplaces, not just at the level of industries or occupations.

[44] According to David Griffith (2005: 70) differences between N.C. and other nontraditional destinations for Mexican immigration include the fact that recent decades have not seen population stagnation or declines, and the South in general has large population of low-skilled African Americans, "many of whose jobs have either been undermined by or abandoned to Mexicans."

neighborhoods, and is instead usually surmised from interviews with a cross-section of individuals over a range of actual institutional contexts. Further, by narrowing the scope of interest in Latino-African American relations to "conflict" unnecessarily restricts the range in modes of intergroup interaction that might be observed, and which would offer a richer, more complex representation of boundary processes and intergroup relations. Specifically, by almost exclusively considering conflict to stem from competition, scholars fail to consider alternative grievances that might underpin conflict, particularly that which is projected most by Latinos.

On the other hand, a near exclusive focus on the potential for "tense" relations between Latinos and African Americans fails to adequately account for these groups' relationships with whites, and obscures the continued white dominance most apparent at the highest institutional levers of communities, counties, and the state. Indeed, we learn remarkably little about the contexts that nurtured the wave of anti-immigrant legislation currently sweeping across the U.S. South, with Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama passing Arizona-inspired bills that target unauthorized migrants in increasingly punitive ways (Lacy and Odem 2009; Weissman et al 2009). But if even a cursory glance at these cases tells us one thing, it is that these measures were sponsored, not by the working class African Americans that migrants are supposed to threaten the most, but by conservative white political activists. I return to this theme in Chapter Seven.

Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2005: 252) see new destinations for Latino/a migration as a "unique opportunity to study the destabilization of existing patterns of interethnic relations – largely based in terms of black and white polarity – as well as the formation of yet to be defined positions and structures of inter- and intra-group interaction." I strongly agree with the authors that "[t]his transitional stage requires a great deal of attention to processes of interaction and group position formation rather than a commitment to a particular theory of interethnic

relations." However, I qualify their assertion that a "sense of group position" does not yet exist at the point of "initial intergroup contact." It may not exist in a fully-settled form, but contours of an emergent sense of group position are perhaps discernible. And from the perspective of posterity, understanding how and why Latino/as became incorporated as they eventually did will depend crucially on piecing together clues from the early phase of incorporation. At the same time, Latino/a migration to "new destinations" has been unfolding rapidly for at least twenty years, so their settlement and incorporation experience is maturing already.

In the next section, I draw the reader into the most crucial domain of Latino/a migrants' incorporation into American racial and class stratification systems. It is, fundamentally, through their experiences in the workplace that Latino/a migrants develop a sense of their group position as *hispanos*. It is these workplace experiences too which condition Latinos' relations with native-born groups, particularly African Americans, given their perceptions about the positions of both groups in the workplace.

PERCEPTIONS OF PRIVILEGE AND THE EXPERIENCE OF SUBORDINATION

The encounter between Cristina and Jeremy that I re-tell in the opening scene is striking because it conveys in no uncertain terms the sense Latina workers have about African Americans' position within the social organization of labor, and by implication, their own group's position. Cristina's comment to me, which she reiterated to Jeremy and Adrienne, has a very clear interpretation: if she were black, she wouldn't have to work, but as long as she is not black, she has to work. Her subsequent comments fill in the sharp boundary that her initial remark draws between African American workers and Latina/o workers: Jeremy is lazy, now that he has an easy job, but he was also lazy when he had a hard job. In attributing laziness to African American workers that are seen as occupying a position of privilege within the social

organization of labor, Latina/o workers strive to even out their statuses, at least symbolically, adding substance to the expressive boundary drawn relentlessly through ethnoracial identification of African Americans as *moyos*, *negros*, and *morenos*.

The encounter that opens this chapter is remarkable also for the rather restrained response of Jeremy, Adrienne, and Coreen to Cristina's sharp barb. Although he calls her on her initial offending remark, Jeremy lets slide what would be clearly recognizable within the context of American racial sensibilities as faux pas. After all, what would an African American meatpacker from Wadeville have to do with a Honduran Garifuna dancing *punta* in a North Atlantic coastal village? Jeremy's muted reaction to these kinds of comments from Latina coworkers was evident on other occasions as well.[45] Leticia, a 36-year old Honduran woman from the North Atlantic department of Colón, moved to North Carolina from Houston, following her sister Carina. Because she was pregnant, Leticia was taken off the loin bagging line where she normally worked, and performed a variety of lighter tasks as instructed by Itty or Michael, usually bagging tenderloins, putting labels on bagged meat after it had gone through the *tortuga*, or pushing a cart stacked with bagged bellies to and from the line. One day she was bagging tenderloins when Jeremy stood in front of her to chat, "assisting" Leticia at the tenderloins by placing two tenderloins on the spoon for her to bag, something he does when not doing his paperwork, throwing bagged meats onto the line from combos, procuring materials from the supply rooms,

[45] A few days after this, Jeremy and Vincent were sitting together in the cafeteria when I walked by their table. A group of workers had collected money to buy Mother's Day pizza. Vincent protested that I hadn't invited him. "Sorry, it was a last minute thing," I told him. As I walked away, Jeremy called out "Janet doesn't like black men!" perhaps associating me with Cristina's remarks. I protested that wasn't true, that I had never said that. At that point, Vincent laughed and jumped in. "No, that's not true, 'cause she went to the Chocolate City!" Jeremy and Vincent laughed heartily at this revelation. Some months earlier, when I first transferred to Loin Boning, I had been bagging ribs at a table where Vincent and Gary were trimming ribs. Vincent had been asking me lots of questions about what I did when I wasn't at work, teasing I was like an "old lady" for staying home all the time. I told him about my recent trip to the Chocolate Paradise, a black nightclub in Bennettsburg, to see rapper OJ the Juice Man with some coworkers from the Marination department. He and Gary both got a kick out of this, asking me if I was "scared" because "only dope boys go there."

or standing around. After a year working a knife job trimming ribs, Jeremy had been given an assistant-type job – checking the status of orders, ordering and retrieving product and box labels, throwing bagged meats from combos onto the line to be vacuum sealed, and doing assorted light tasks.

Leticia was being playful, having me translate to Jeremy that he was "very handsome," teasing him. "What do women do when you go to the mall, do they want to kidnap you?" Leticia says "all the women think he is handsome," then she takes it back, saying only she thinks so. In the midst of this playful banter, Leticia tells me she knew Jeremy when he started here at the ribs station. "There," she says, "él era muy trabajador [he was a hard worker]," which I translated to him. "Pero ahora es muy haragán, muy lazy," she says, which he can obviously understand without my translation. She mocks his "assistance," placing tenderloins on the spoon and asking in an exasperated tone "what is this?" She rubs the tenderloins on her white butcher coat, smearing it with meat juice. "He does this so it looks like he's worked!" Jeremy protests this claim mildly "I work hard!" Henry, the white product re-conditioner (picks up meat from the floor, washes it, and brings it back to the line) and self-described ex-hippie from upstate New York with a serious heart condition and a probable drinking problem, stopped to chat with us. Referring again to Jeremy, Leticia says "él parece un gorilón." Henry, who was always friendly with everyone and tried to pick up Spanish words, guesses correctly "a gorilla?" Jeremy turns to Leticia "I look like a gorilla?" "A big gorilla!" she responds in English. Henry seemed slightly uncomfortable but Leticia was unperturbed. Jeremy sort of chuckled, and I ignored this, looking down and feeling mortified when she wanted me to confirm "doesn't he?" All of a sudden it occurs to her and she blurts out "King Kong!" "I look like King Kong?" Jeremy asks calmly.[46]

[46] Later, I thought about whether I should've brought up the potential offensiveness of this to her, but decided I did best for the time being to keep my mouth shut to avoid alienating any more Latino workers. I had recently gotten

Even Ileana, Cristina's relative, who is proud to say she gets along well with black workers, sometimes teases them about being lazy. She describes a routine interaction she has with Bobby, an African American Quality Assurance worker, when a loin reaches the end of the line where she works and has not been properly de-boned. "Like Bobby [a QA], he says – throwing me the bone – "Ileana!" I tell him "Hey Bobby, what happened? Easy! You – knife!" I tell him to grab a knife from Horacio so he can remove the bone. "No, you!" he tells me. So I say to him "You – lazy!" [laughing] And he says "Oh Ileana" [sighing]. I say "Bobby" and high-five him. And he high-fives me. Now when I go to the line and a bone is coming down he'll grab a knife and remove it. I say to him "Good!" because he's helping me. Nah, I get along well with all of them [African Americans]."

Latino/a workers' frequent characterization of African Americans as "lazy" corresponded to their perceptions that black workers occupied a privileged position in the workplace. Such perceptions revolved around three crucial distinctions, namely, that African Americans had easier jobs than they did, that they were domineering, and that they were subject to a less harsh labor discipline regime. I illustrate each of these points in turn.

Los Moyos No La Hacen [Moyos Don't Get Things Done/Moyos Can't Hack It]

Working at the ribs station, in the packing area set off from the end of the loin boning lines, gave workers ample opportunity to interact. Trimming, bagging, and packing ribs around tables meant that workers were in close proximity to one another and being somewhat off the main lines meant there was a little less pressure to keep up, since ribs would inevitably have to

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into tiffs with Doris and Tania, two of the crankiest women I have ever met. Jeremy certainly could have said a lot more to her and opted not to for whatever reason. Perhaps because Jeremy felt that Leticia had affection for him and was ignorant of the inappropriateness of her comparison. In any event, a few months later Jeremy quit his job at Swine's to run a bar he had recently purchased, and Leticia was hurt that he had not said goodbye.

be piled up in a giant pan or in combos. In April, two young black women were hired and pretty immediately assigned to work at the ribs station bagging ribs. Aisha was 20 and had been living for a while in Florida, but moved back to Perry to try to save money for school. Her parents were both long-time Swine's employees – her mother worked in Hamboning and her father had worked in Water Treatment and the Cut Floor box room. Aisha made clear from the beginning that working here was only temporary for her, and that factory work was not for her. She was only working here to save enough money to buy a car; then, she planned to go back to school. Adrienne was 21, funny, seemed more mature and less naïve than Aisha. She has a two-year old son and was separated from her child's father. As it turned out, Adrienne was close with Michael, the floor supervisor. Her father and Michael are best friends, and 'Uncle Michael," as she calls him, frequently calls her house to speak with him.

Aisha was the object of both derision and entertainment for the Latina/o workers at the ribs station - Cristina, Daniel, Gerardo, Hernán, Rosa, Alma, Andrew, and even people who came by this area to throw bagged meat on the line. Carina, Leticia's sister, was doing this the other day when she remarked on Aisha's demeanor to me: "She seems tired, like she doesn't feel like working." Her permanently glued and heavily mascaraed eyelash extensions, which a Quality Assurance employee informed her were prohibited, drew laughs and commentary. "She won't look pretty anymore when she takes them off!" Cristina predicted, which I did not translate despite the fact that Aisha asked me to. Even more humorous to workers, one day Aisha showed up with voluminous hair extensions which she had trouble keeping covered under her hair net and hard hat. Aisha was a goofy, mostly friendly woman with a flirtatious streak but very little interest in breaking a sweat. She took off for the bathroom numerous times throughout the day, made frequent trips to the supervisors' office for supplies, and visited the nurse

regularly. When she was working, she kept a steady pace, but never seemed hurried or even concerned about giving supervisors the impression that she was working at a frenzied pace. Because she was happy-go-lucky and non-confrontational, Aisha wasn't despised in the way that some of the older black women workers were. Like Constance, ironically named because she was, along with Doris and Tania, among the crankiest and most impatient women I have ever met in my life. But Aisha could be exasperating to work with. As irritated as I got, having myself internalized some of the logic of super-exploitation, I tried to avoid complaining about her because usually my co-workers responded in racialized terms.

At times, the banter and jostling at the ribs station seemed relentless and infused with hostility. One Tuesday in April, Daniel,[47] Claudia's Mexican boyfriend who had switched his pallet jack driver job for a job trimming ribs, and Aisha were flirting. I found myself bewildered at their flirtation, as it was mixed in with him being a jerk to her and her being out of it and slow, typical for someone new. Daniel had told me "This *moya*, this *moyita*, I tell her she's pretty". A while later, Claudia yelled from the *tortuga* that the ribs we were bagging weren't reaching the bottom of the bag, and therefore the bag wasn't sealing properly, which Daniel conveyed to me, adding "it must be the *moya*." The following day this treatment escalated. At first Aisha would ask me "What'd he say?" when Daniel made remarks about her. Aisha told me to ask Cristina "what does English sound like to her?" When Cristina responded "exactly what Spanish sounds like to her, blah blah," Daniel interjected "What does this *moya* know? She doesn't even speak English. Who knows what she speaks, Jewish."

[47] In my first days working in Loin Boning, several Latino workers expressed surprise that I was Puerto Rican, saying they thought I was a *bolilla*, and teasing that Daniel and I looked like siblings because we were both *güeros*. I later found out that Daniel was *indígena*. Claudia told me this once we became friends, after he had quit and returned to Mexico, but she never knew his true identity – either that he was *indígena* or his real name, which apparently marked him as *indio* – while they were romantically involved.

When I'd first gotten to the table in the morning, there was already a mound of ribs on the table waiting to be bagged, and Cristina had proclaimed loudly, "los *moyos* no la hacen!" [*moyos* don't get things done!/*moyos* can't hack it!]. Daniel repeatedly complained about Cliff, an older African American man with a limp, who had been moved from the ribs saw and was now being "trained" to trim ribs: "this *moyo* doesn't work." He also complained about Thomas in his presence. When others were complaining that Thomas wasn't working the knife, even though "he's a knife worker but he doesn't want to," Thomas was packing ribs and doing assorted light tasks ["pelándosela" - slang for jerking off]. Daniel exclaimed "This *moyo pendejo*, if it were up to me I'd send him home because he doesn't work!" Interactions between Daniel and Aisha escalated when, in the context of him rushing her, egging her on – "apúrate! trabaja!" [Hurry up! Work!] – and urging her to quit –"Quit! Quit!" – he calls her "*pinche cabrona*!" Cristina opens her eyes wide. I tell Aisha this basically means "fucking bitch." "Don't you call me a bitch," she tells him, and he repeats "cabrona."

It is not that Latina workers do not identify *any* Latinos who are able to escape the most oppressive elements of exploitation, and who may therefore be resented or disparaged as lazy. Indeed, I was quite astounded at the degree to which workers had so internalized exploitation and labor discipline that they would constantly scrutinize and criticize other workers' work performance and compel them to work faster and harder, shooting them dagger eyes or badmouthing them. Rosa and Rafael were singled out by Latina/o and African American workers for slacking and shirking but such assessments weren't racialized in any way.
Sometimes, black workers would accuse Latina/o workers of laziness too. The back and forth slandering could reach comical levels.

One Wednesday in May, I was bagging ribs with Cliff, a middle-aged African American man who had worked in boning for a year but was constantly being re-assigned to different jobs, partly because of health problems. After working as a mechanic for many years, he had been laid off and taken a job at Fresh Birds Co. in Linden for 3 weeks before getting called back for a job here, an opportunity he didn't consider twice because the pay was much higher. Alma, a short and round Honduran woman in her thirties, and Alexis, a Mexican man in his forties, weighed and sorted the ribs at two scales along the line. Alma kept yawning and climbing down from the platform where she stood behind the scale all day, making unhappy faces, stretching her sore body. Cliff looked at me and in his thick country drawl says "She's kind of lazy, ain't she?" I thought at first he meant me, but he said "No, from what I can tell you work." The irony was that two days earlier I had been bagging loin chunks near the boning line, and Cliff had been sorting different loins at the end of the line. Cristina had popped around at some point, bantering with him indecipherably, calling out "Cliff!" and holding out her cupped hand with her fingers outstretched. Cliff exclaimed "no, no!" protesting her gesture and laughing wildly. Even though I knew what she meant, I asked her about the gesture and she told me it means "que es huevón, que los huevos le pesan" [that he's lazy, that his balls are heavy], and laughed heartily.

Banter, teasing, or otherwise taunting is a common communicative practice between workers. Despite the English-Spanish language barrier, Latina/o and African American workers banter, tease, and taunt each other in ways that sometimes blur playfulness and hostility. Not infrequently, these jokes revolve around someone's work effort, and as I have already suggested, sex is another common theme. In the first week of my transfer to the loin boning department, a Salvadoran ribs trimmer named Rosa, came to help Vincent, Linda, and me finish bagging ribs at the end of shift. Vincent rips into Rosa, and I cannot tell if this banter is playful or not. "You so

lazy, Rosa. Finally you're doing some work today! What you been doing all day anyway?" She frowns, seeming to understand some of what he says. She calls him "pendejo" and "lazy, *haragán*" to me whether or not he's listening. He does catch the *pendejo* part and comments on this. He asks her how her kid is doing, and when she says he's fine, he continues "Did you just make up that excuse to be out of work?" She tells me that her kid was in the hospital for 3 weeks and she was given leave. He protests he was asking her for real about her kid and she just said he was fine. She says to me "He doesn't work, that's why they put him over here at this table." He continues ragging on her, now about her young boyfriend, telling me he's in his twenties. "Ask her!" he says to me. Rosa says he's 26, and adds there's a lot of "chaca-chaca" [hanky panky]. Vincent continues "that's just because she was his first that he likes it. Hey Rosa, do you take out your teeth for your man?" I notice her front teeth appear to be missing or perhaps her gums are receded. He tells me to ask her, and I refuse, feeling embarrassed for her. Linda is now listening in and says "Vincent is terrible!" howling in her throaty smoker's voice.[48]

What was important was that Latinas' vilification of African American workers' labor effort more often than not was leveled at the entire group – *los moyos, los morenos, or los negros* while African Americans' vilification of Latina/o workers' labor effort was directed solely at individuals, not at the group.[49] Further, when black workers try to pass judgment on the work

[48] Rosa and Cristina could dish it too. At the end of July, we were all hurriedly bagging ribs as we got ready to finish the work day. Perhaps Vincent was mouthing off at one of them, because Rosa mutters "*pendejo huevón*." "You too," Vincent shoots back. Then out of nowhere Cristina says to me "él se molesta cuando le preguntan si es gay" [he gets mad when people ask him if he's gay]. "People ask him if he's gay?" I ask her. "It's just that he looks gay, don't you think?" she asks me. "Hmm, I don't know." I say to Vincent, "she says you get mad when people ask you if you're gay." "Gay, me? I ain't a faggot." Cristina was kind of chuckling. Vincent says "your husband got a *sancho*!" [Honduran slang for male lover]. She laughs, and says "yeah, *tú* eres el sancho!" I told Vincent "she said you're his *sancho*." Cristina howls "I don't care, *a mí no me importa*!"

[49] Only once did I hear an African American worker – a cantankerous woman named Constance – impugn the work ethic of Latinos as a group. And in this instance, the valence of the banter involves was not clear to me.

effort of Latinas, the response is indignant. In my second week in Loin Boning, Michael assigned me to work with Doris, a Honduran woman in her forties, bagging *japoneses* (loins cut and bagged according to different specifications for export to Japan), some of the toughest loins to work with. I was tasked with pulling loins off the line, laying them on a stand, and placing an absorbent paper on the surface, and Doris would then wrap the opening of a bag over the top of the loin and push the entire thing into the tight bag, finally throwing it back on a line. It was hard work. Doris is surly, her chubby face always bright red, and most workers try to avoid getting on her bad side. She seems to be exasperated by my pace. Even though it is fast, it is not frenzied. For a moment though, she loosens up and tells me she has worked here for nine years but is thinking about quitting because the long hours and heavy work are wearing her down. Later in the day, two middle-aged black women, Eileen and Eve, come to bag loins on the line. Doris gets upset when, apparently, Eileen comments that we are "just talking" when there was a brief lull in the loin line. This gets Doris riled up, and a while later again, Doris snaps at Eileen "take it easy!" Later, seeing the two women standing about during a lull, she says to me, her voice tinged with bitter anger, "they can stand around without doing anything and no one says anything to them." "Who," I ask. "The *negras*. If only they worked like they complain!"

The brazenness with which Latinos charge black workers with laziness is perhaps particularly startling given how politically incorrect it is in the context of contemporary American sensibilities around race. But the characterization of black workers as lazy is probably not surprising to most people, this being a conventional racist trope as old as slavery itself. This characterization has also been documented by scholars studying poultry workers in other parts of the American South (Stuesse 2009). However, in the context of as demanding a workplace as this, accusations of being lazy – *haragán* or *huevón* being the most common slurs followed by

"lazy," and frequently accompanied by a palms-up cupping of the hand that connotes heavy testicles – have a patently relative meaning, and would certainly ring hollow to any outsider who has never stepped foot in a meatpacking plant. Few people would consider even a person standing idly all day in a frigid, unpleasant environment from before sunrise to after nightfall to be lazy. And of course, at Swine's nobody stands idly for long.

On the other hand, it would probably surprise most people to imagine that black workers occupy a position of privilege and advantage in the workplace. But because privilege and disadvantage are assessed in a relative sense in a context where group ascriptions signal distinct vulnerabilities, it should not really come as a surprise that Latina/os perceive American blacks as enjoying advantages they do not and resent them for this. A crucial point, however, is how these advantages, which we might expect *native-born workers* to have for a variety of reasons, including citizenship and nativity, English fluency, social capital, and seniority, are seen to accrue to them as *blacks* rather than as *Americans* more generally. The thrust of intergroup conflict, if it is to be thought of as such, is not competition over jobs and resources, in which case the motivation would be blacks' sense of competitive economic threat. Rather, it is about the perception of group-based advantages and disadvantages relative to oppressive exploitation, and this draws our attention to the configuration of group relations in the workplace.

"The Negros Always Want to Humiliate You, Just Because You Are Hispano"

Some Latinos perceived African Americans co-workers to be domineering, unfairly insisting that work be done on their terms. This was described as a bitter and humiliating experience by some. Leslie, an older Honduran worker, explained that she resisted such efforts at humiliating Latino/a workers.

> "That *morena* doesn't do anything, that Janice. No, that *negra*…! And that's the problem there. There's too little personnel, and they want the work to get done. And more so now that there are lots of work orders. It's killer for me. You feel desperate, leaving work at 8 or 9 at night. No, the *negros* always want to humiliate you, just because you are *hispano*. The *bolillo* is more…but the *negro*! The *negro* always wants to see you as lesser, he humiliates you. Let's say me, on the ham line you have the *morena* Eileen. She's always like that. She wants you to do what she says. But I don't go along with it. I talk back to them, the little [English] that I know I talk back. And so they don't say anything to me. But they always want to look at you as being lesser. There's always racism. Because you're not from this country. For everything. You're an immigrant here. They always see you as being lesser."

A similar depiction was given by Reina, whose perceptions of how whites and blacks treat her echoed those of Marrow's (2007) respondents in important ways. Furthermore, Reina conveys the same kind of indignation that some of Marrow's respondents expressed upon having their expectations of "moral hierarchy" upset by the perception of worse treatment from blacks than from whites. We were discussing her perception that supervisors treated black and Latino workers differently, a topic I return to in Chapter 6 in greater depth, when she explained her perception of differential treatment from white and African American workers more generally.

> "I think *negros* are more racist. Sometimes…I imagine maybe it's because the *negros* – since the *moyos* used to be treated badly…But yes, sometimes you look at *moyos* and *blancos* – *blancos* are also racist towards us. But as I see it, it's more blacks than whites. And since there hardly are any *blancos*, you know. There are more *negros* than *blancos* [at work]. I once had problems with a *morena*, that Shameela. I had problems with her. I feel like sometimes they think that since we don't speak English or we're from another country, we don't understand. But sometimes. The good things don't stick, but the bad things do. So I talked back to her in English what came to mind. She didn't like it and went upstairs to say that I had pushed her. She told Itty's grandson, and they agreed to say that I had pushed her. Supposedly, I'd already been fired. But then Renata Chatuye [Honduran Garifuna HR Assistant Manager] took a look at our records, and I had never had any problem. And she had, people had complained. I got suspended for three days, but thanks to Renata, she's the one that helped me. Because according to Larry [HR Manager] I was already fired, because she gets along well with him. The other day Patricia was throwing the carts around and now I know I'm not going to fight with them

> because they end up winning and we end up losing. So what you have to do instead is go upstairs to complain.

Reina feels that supervisors will defer to African American workers version of events and therefore finds herself subordinated not just to management, but also to black workers who will always end up winning. And when I asked her how she thought *hispanos* were treated in the broader American society beyond the workplace, Reina made it clear that her experience of American society is defined almost entirely within the workplace. She expands on her view that whites are less racist than African Americans despite her earlier comment that there are hardly any whites at Swine's, the context that defines her experience in the U.S.

> "I haven't really had much of a life here. I've never been one to hang out in the *discotecas* or anything like that. I only know about work. But I think the *blancos* aren't so racist. I see that sometimes they treat you a little bit more…with less of that racism, that uneasiness, whereas the *moyos* if you graze them they go like this [jerks away]. And the Americans, the Americans I have dealt with – there must be, because there's always all sorts – but I think it's more the *negros*. I think there must be whites but maybe they don't show it more than the *negros*. It probably has to be, I imagine, that since whites are really more from here than even *negros*…Because the *negros* got here like us, actually worse than us, because the *negros* got here as slaves. Exactly, slaves that didn't earn anything, whereas we get paid for our work but not them. They got here in a worse position. Actually, they shouldn't be this way because they have been through what we are going through. Their situation was even worse than ours. They actually shouldn't be this. I wonder why they are this way."

Reina is moreover perplexed at the treatment she perceives from African Americans, whom she reasons should be more understanding of her plight given their own history of oppression rooted in slavery. As she sees it – her perspective informed almost entirely by her experiences in the workplace – African Americans are "more racist" towards Latinos than whites, whom she nevertheless notes are almost entirely absent from the workplace.

"Things Have to Be Parejas [Equal]"

Latina/o workers were convinced, not just that black workers "don't have to work" - perhaps because they are given easier or more desirable jobs - and were therefore lazy. But they also perceived that African Americans – who they felt should be more sympathetic to migrants given their own history of oppression – preferred instead to humiliate and dominate them, as Leslie and Reina's stories illustrate. Latinos also felt that African American workers were able to escape some of the more oppressive elements of the labor discipline regime, because supervisors were more likely to defer to their wishes and subject them to less intense surveillance and humiliation. Latina/o workers were sure that supervisors were more likely to choose pleasing an African American worker over pleasing a Latina worker.

Early in May I was at the ribs station when Natalia asked me to come upstairs to tell our superintendent George about what she considered an unfair incident. She had been bagging Japanese loins when an African American worker named Trina, arriving late to the floor for whatever reason, insisted that Natalia move from the spot where she was working and Natalia refused. The floor supervisor Michael had come up and told Natalia to move. She was incensed. "I don't understand this discrimination since all of us here, white, black, and *hispano*, are all supposed to be equal." I convey to George her complaint about discrimination. His response was "Did you ask Michael why he moved you? Michael maybe had a reason for moving her. I'll have to ask Michael and get back to her." Of course, he never did.

Latina/o workers were also certain that supervisors applied different disciplinary standards to African American and Latina/o workers.

One afternoon in May, we were coming back from the 2:45 break, which we went on early. I had smoked a cigarette and drank a shot of coffee really quickly outside, and I noticed when I came back in to the cafeteria that people were already rushing to get back on the floor. I

knew that for whatever reason people were going back to work early, or at least earlier than usual, and I was annoyed. I got my butcher coat, apron, sleeves, and gloves back on quickly, and as I returned to my station I noticed that Aisha and Adrienne were not yet back, and I knew Linda couldn't be back because she was going out to smoke when I was coming back in. I accused Cristina, Adriana, and José of coming back from break early, which they denied. I had been standing there for about a minute when I noticed that George, the African American superintendent, was at the stairs peering over us. Thomas had just gotten back, was putting on his gear, and was talking to someone. Adrienne had just returned, and Aisha came shortly after, standing under the stairs with the belly cart out of George's view. I saw George signal for several people to go upstairs to the supervisors' office. Janice, an African American rib trimmer, meets him halfway up the stairs and they chat briefly before she returns to her station. Then Alma and Rosa are told to come upstairs, and I'm summoned to translate. As we climb up the stairs, Hernán grins and shouts "They're going to make you sign the paper [a write-up]!" I ask them jokingly what they had done now and they start ranting.

"This racist old man, how come the *morenos* can get here late but they don't get called up here, and only *hispanos* get called up here but they don't say anything to the *morenos*." Rosa releases a flurry of curses in rapid succession: "viejo serote, viejo culero!" [old turd, old faggot]. Alma echoes her rant with a look of indignation. George sits in his office chair and says sternly "I've talked to y'all a couple of times already about coming back from break late. Apparently it doesn't work when I try to be a nice guy about it, so now I'm going to do it the other way, and the next time that y'all are late it's going to be a written warning, and the next time it's going to be a 3-day suspension." Rosa keeps saying things to me in Spanish, such as "and why only us?," but George keeps interrupting, saying "listen to me, this is the last time, I have warned y'all

several times, and it's not going to be a supervisor that brings you upstairs next time it's going to be me" [the superintendent]. As if to add insult to injury, he says "If I can work without you for ten minutes I can work without you for three days. Thank you, and thank you Janet [my first name]," he says dismissing us. Rosa keeps trying to say things, and he just repeats, "thank you." As we are about to walk out I ask "Do you all want me to say something to him or what." Rosa says "What for, racist old man." When we get back, Adriana comments "Why only the two of them if there was other people, the *morenos*, who hadn't gotten here, he only calls out the *hispanos*, you see?" I said I thought he had talked to Janice too, and she says "but there were others who hadn't gotten here and who weren't working yet." Echoing a statement I heard many Latina/os make, Adriana concludes "things have to be *parejas*" [equal].

CONCLUSION

Scholars interested in Latino/a migrant incorporation have not adequately addressed the collective processes through which this group attains a sense of their position within the stratified system of belonging in the U.S. While researchers have drawn on Blumer's model to account for the character of intergroup relations in the transforming American South, and considered the implications for how working class Latinos are becoming incorporated in a now more complex racialized stratification system, there are important limitations to approaches so far. A critical flaw has been a nearly exclusive focus on how African Americans react to Latinos, and how the perception of exclusionary behavior resulting from competition is pushing Latinos towards a particular route of incorporation. This has resulted in a failure to attend to how Latinos construct understandings and representations of African Americans, and what this tells us about how Latinos view their own position in the system.

It is as if only African Americans, and not Latinos, have a sense of group position, and therefore the capacity to feel threatened. Yet, the overwhelming sense of grievance that Latina/os express as embittered subordinates has its counterpoint in their perception that African Americans occupy a privileged position within the social organization of labor, a perception that breeds a strong resentment towards blacks and which is articulated through the elaboration of a variety of symbolic boundaries. It is this feeling of relative deprivation, not competitive threat per se, which fuels resentment *towards* rather than from African Americans. Latina/o workers at Swine's are indignant about what they see as their disadvantaged position within the social organization of labor, a position in which they are the most oppressively exploited. Comments from several workers suggest that a part of this indignation stems from the upending of a moral hierarchy in which they did not anticipate blacks occupying a position higher than their own, as Marrow's findings also suggest, and which is in line with the more or less universal devaluation of blackness. And when Latino workers find that, at least as they perceive it, African Americans occupy a relatively more advantaged position at work, a gnawing resentment builds.

Given how this resentment is racialized as advantages that accrue to American blacks as opposed to Americans in general, and recognizing that the vulnerabilities that migrants confront, exacerbated by the disciplining functions of illegality, are racialized as attaching to *hispanos* as a group, several issues must be considered. Scholars have drawn on Bobo and Hutchings' (1996) concept of "racial alienation" as being particularly helpful for explaining the character of relations among subordinate groups. But this leads to several plausible accounts about relations between Latino/as and African Americans. The first, which is the conventional take and the conclusion put forth recently by Marrow for Latino-African American relations in the American South, is that African Americans – the quintessential racially alienated group – react negatively

towards Latino/as, who they feel a socioeconomic competition-based threat to their sense of group position. The second, which was the more pronounced tendency in my data, is that although both are subordinate groups and therefore experience racial alienation to one or another degree, Latinos perceive themselves to occupy a disadvantaged position relative to African Americans within the social organization of labor of a meatpacking plant in the U.S. South. Whether or not African Americans concur with this perception, they apparently do not feel sufficiently aggrieved to contest it in group terms.[50]

There are a number of limitations inherent to interview data – the inability to evaluate distinct modes of action (what people say versus what they do) or talk (what people say when prompted with an interviewer's question versus what people say in spontaneous, unprompted exchanges). These have been amplified by a reliance on reports from Latinos as to their perceptions and attributions of discriminatory treatment and exclusionary behavior to draw conclusions about the actual behavior of African Americans towards this group. Studying the meaningful boundary-making processes through which Latina/o workers distinguish their experience within the social organization of labor from that of African Americans sheds a bright light on an important dimension of Latino migrant incorporation in the American South and beyond. But now that I have shed this light on Latina/os understandings and representations of African Americans, what about the other dimension – African Americans understandings and representations of Latino/as? I return to this question in Chapter Seven, after I address how the composition of the authority structure mediates Latinos' perceptions of African American

[50] Some of the ideas in this chapter are hinted at in comments from Latinos interviewed by Marrow, who suggest that blacks are advantaged at their workplaces too. The appearance of these comments among Marrow's interviewees suggests these findings are not limited to social relations at Swine's but may extend across many American workplaces, certainly in the South. In fact, similar clues surface in the data collected by Waldinger and Lichter on Los Angeles low wage workplaces. But the most direct acknowledgment that the social organization of labor may be an important factor mediating Latino/a-African American relations comes from Angela Stuesse (2009).

privilege in the workplace, the topic of Chapter Six. But first, in Chapter Five I delve more deeply into the perceptions and experience of vulnerability that convince Latinos that there is a cost to being *hispano* and a value to being black at Swine's.

CHAPTER 5

THE VALUE OF BEING *NEGRO*, THE COST OF BEING *HISPANO*

Late one evening in March soon after my transfer to Loin Boning, Leticia, who was in the third trimester of her pregnancy, complained to me about not being sent home after working eight hours as some pregnant workers got permission to do. After we were finished bagging all the combos of loins that had accumulated over the course of the day and were feeling relieved at the thought that we were done, Michael directed us to another three combos of loins and ribs to pack. "Maybe they think we are idiots," she says as an explanation for why we in this department get "wrung out and exploited," the words I responded with when Michael brought out more work for us to do 13 hours into our shift. Leticia asks me why I transferred to the Loin Boning and Packing Department from Marination, and I tell her it's a long story that I will tell her another time. She asks me if I have worked with Constance yet. Constance was an older African American worker who was persistently cranky and even mean. What had I thought of her, how had she treated me? I shrug with an expression that could be read as "not good." Leticia replied that even though "among us" there's a lot of gossiping, "we" still stick together, unlike Constance. Leticia says someone told her that Constance said she "didn't like *hispanos*."

Not long after this, Leticia was telling me about how she was initially assigned to a knife job when she first started working here almost a year ago, but that gradually she had been re-assigned to packing. Because knife jobs were paid more than packing jobs, I asked if she had kept the higher pay rate even though she wasn't doing knife work. "Ha! No, I would have to be of that color for them to do that". "Which one?" I asked feigning naivete. "*Morena*," she responded matter-of-factly. She added that if she stands around and Itty sees her not working he gets mad, but she points over to Aisha and Adrienne, who are pretty much not doing anything because it is slow at the ribs. "If it's them," she says, "he doesn't get mad." We were killing ourselves to finish bagging combos of loins that had piled up, and Itty's grandson Dwayne came by the packing area after his work skinning tenderloins on the line was finished, and just stood there watching us. Leticia signaled for me to look at him. "It's worth it to be *negro* here. He's Itty's's grandson and look how he's standing around."

In the context of oppressive exploitation at Swine's, the perception of one group's advantages is inextricably tied to another group's position of disadvantage. It is in such a context that blackness comes to be viewed by some Latina/os as a valuable resource, despite the fact that blackness retains a universally disparaged status, even (or especially) in migrants' countries of origin. Like Leticia's comments, Cristina's declaration that she would come to work painted black so she didn't have to work illustrates this subtle insight rather powerfully. It is difficult to imagine that blackness could be a valuable resource, as some Latina/os suggest. There is an abundance of research that demonstrates employers' negative assessments of black workers, particularly when compared to the virtues of hard work and subservience that they perceive among other types of workers, namely immigrants (Zamudio and Lichter 2008; Donato and Bankston 2008; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Moss and Tilly 2001; Holzer 1996; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991). The "soft skills" immigrants bring to the workplace, which employers refer to as having the right attitude towards work that offers limited extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, have been interpreted differently by scholars. These scholars have identified these "soft skills" as a shorthand for immigrants' "tractability" relative to other kinds of workers in the face of employer demands for compliance and subordination (Zamudio and Lichter 2008; Donato and Bankston 2008; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Indeed, it is this distinction-making that informs employers' documented preference for hiring immigrants over native-born workers across a variety of industries. Employers may prefer to hire immigrants over native-born workers because they are viewed as the ideal subordinates. But for the same reason, it could be hypothesized that *once hired* native-born workers are situated relatively more favorably than immigrants within the social organization of labor, an important extension of ethnic succession theories that I proposed in Chapter Two. Remarkably little is known about how workers perceive distinctions among

themselves, and what conditions shape these perceptions, as I discussed in Chapters Three and Four. This analysis is important because if we understand employers' preferences, not as objective evaluations of individual workers' ability to perform some job but as different types of workers' relative capacity and suitability for oppressive exploitation, then we must imagine that this is likely to be reflected somehow in the social organization of labor, and therefore in social relations among workers.

In this chapter, I examine the rather surprising claim that it is "worth it" to be black at Swine's, focusing attention on the vulnerabilities of migrant illegality which, on the shop floor, have the tendency to bleed onto Latinos as a group, and results in the perception of a cost to being *hispano*. Perhaps because *hispanos* come together as a group through their subordinated status in the workplace, it is a group identity that is fraught with internal tensions, much as Leticia's comments in the opening encounter suggest. Leticia lets me know that, even though "we" [hispanos] gossip about each other and put one another down, "we" stick together, apart from and unlike African American workers.[51] In the first section, I propose that a crucial corollary to the vulnerability through deportability that illegality produces for the migrant is the vulnerability through disposability that illegality produces for the migrant *worker*, especially in the context of intensified immigration enforcement policies in the U.S., particularly in the South. I show how such vulnerabilities came together in Cristina's harrowing experience at Swine's. In the second section, I demonstrate the challenge that group-based vulnerabilities such as those produced by illegality, which radiate onto the entire group of *hispanos*, poses for solidarity among workers in the struggle for dignity and justice on the shop floor. In the third section, I

[51] Leticia had been teased mercilessly by Latina coworkers when she first started working at Swine's. These women referred to her as "payula" [washed out complexion], and made fun of what they saw as her unkempt appearance. They also gossiped about her husband, who suffered from incapacitating respiratory disease and was unable to work, leaving Leticia to be the sole breadwinner.

argue that Latinos' perceptions of the different positions African Americans and they occupy within the social organization of labor may well be rooted in reality, a possibility that should not be surprising given the bases for employer preferences in hiring.

THE VULNERABILITIES OF "ILLEGALITY"

If Latina/o workers were sure that African Americans were a privileged minority at the factory, they were equally certain that *hispanos* were a singularly disadvantaged group, as numerous quotes throughout the dissertation demonstrate. Although different immigration authorization statuses were tied to different *objective* risks and susceptibilities, a common perception of subordination was shared by Latina/o migrants regardless of their particular status. Indeed, Swine's Latino/a workforce spanned the spectrum of immigration authorization statuses, even as the increasingly stringent employment authorization verification requirements have resulted in the slow purge of workers lacking authorization. On the factory floor, the vulnerabilities of "illegality" are likely to mean that, as Billy, a Coharie crew leader identified by workers as a *bolillo*, told Honduran boning line worker Elsa, "you're a wetback, so you'll do what I say." Some Latina/o migrant workers also contend with what Cecilia Menjívar (2006) has termed the "liminal legality" produced by certain forms of immigration authorization status, like Temporary Protected Status which grants temporary work authorization to vulnerable groups. For Latino/a workers with TPS including Hondurans and Salvadorans who left their countries under dire circumstances, partial and ostensibly temporary legal status in the present tense coexists with uncertainty and impermanence in the long run. For Latinos with TPS, their future legal status is defined at best as the perpetual renewal of temporary and incomplete legality, since no avenue for legal permanent residency is built into Temporary Protected Status.[52] Of

[52] Hondurans in the U.S. at the time Hurricane Mitch struck the Central American republic in 1998 were eligible to apply for Temporary Protected Status at that time. However, once the application period elapsed, no new TPS

course, there were also Latino/a migrants who have obtained legal permanent residency and others who have become naturalized citizens. But in the social context of a workplace characterized by workers of mixed legal statuses, Latino/a migrants shared a distinct vulnerability in that they had limited English-speaking skills and were not "from here," traits easily identified by supervisors on the shop floor. The fusing effect of these shared characteristics, which brings heterogeneous individuals together as a group, was magnified by supervisors' attaching to this group the special vulnerabilities of "illegality" that objectively only pertained to some (migrants lacking work authorization) on the basis of ethnoracial attributes held in common by all (socially coded phenotypic features, language, and culture of Latinos).

Scholars have drawn attention to the legal and political processes of "illegalization" through which the category of the "illegal immigrant" has been rendered an object of state intervention and public concern (Calavita 1998; Ngai 2003; DeGenova 2005; Chavez 2008). The relevant historical timeline for the production of this state of subjection usually begins in 1924, when Congress enacted the first broad immigration control legislation, which initiated numerical restrictions and national origins quotas, and created the Border Patrol. The recent surge in the legal and political efforts to control unauthorized migration and unauthorized migrants goes far beyond the border enforcement initiatives that began much earlier, and is typified by state legislation like Arizona's SB1070. These measures were preceded by provisions included in 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act that allowed local officials to partner with federal authorities and become vested with immigration law enforcement powers.

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applications are allowed, and only renewals are issued up to the present. Salvadorans, whose status as refugees in the U.S. during the country's decade-long civil war became the subject of intense litigation (Coutin 2000), have more recently been eligible for Temporary Protected Status in the immediate aftermath of an earthquake which struck the country in 2001.

In the everyday life of an unauthorized immigrant worker, the vulnerabilities of "illegality" are both immediate and transcendent.

Cristina, an unauthorized migrant worker from Honduras, followed developments surrounding the Arizona law closely, and for weeks we had been discussing it across the work table, sharing the latest updates and debates we had picked up on Univision. Perhaps because of my level of education and the fact that I studied migration, Cristina seemed to think I had some special knowledge or intuition about where U.S. immigration law was headed. Did I think Obama was going to give papers? Did I think the Dream Act was going to be approved? Did I think the Arizona law was going to pass? What would happen if they passed a law like that here in Norte Carolina? When not at work, Cristina had to worry about *retenes*, police checkpoints set up routinely around the area to nab drivers without licenses. A favorite barricade for police was right around the corner from Cristina's trailer park and just down the street from WalMart, where practically the entire county could be found shopping on weekends. People dispatched scouts to detect police checkpoints and called each other to warn of *retenes*, but even so most people got snagged in these at one point or another, and the widespread and frequent fines amounted to a substantial tax on the undocumented. The intensification of immigration enforcement policies in North Carolina, as elsewhere in the U.S. (Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro 2011), was felt acutely by Latina/o migrants, even in Clark County, which did not participate in some of the voluntary programs as other counties did.

The disciplinary functions of migrant "illegality" work through the fear-inducing feature of "deportability" (DeGenova 2005) but, I argue, more proximately for the unauthorized *worker* through the mechanism of "disposability." Only weeks before Cristina was apprehended by police with the collaboration of human resources personnel, Adriana faced a similar, if less

precarious, situation. Cristina herself had told me about it when I returned to the work table from fetching a box of bags: “Adriana got called to the office. Her papers came back bad.” I rushed to the locker room and found Adriana emptying out her locker, collecting her knives and gear, sobbing quietly. All workers at Swine’s were disposable – in fact, we were made to sign a statement during new employee orientation that said as much in fancy legalese, pointing out to us that our employment at the company was “at will.” And as Michael made clear that night in mid-April when, 14 hours into our shift, he castigated workers for daring to go to the bathroom, all of us were only too easily replaceable.

But unauthorized workers have a distinct target on their head, a special *disposability* that I argue serves a labor disciplining function for management just as their unique *deportability* gives management a basis on which to make an important distinction among potential sources of labor. Ironically, deportability “favors” migrants when they receive preferential treatment in the hiring process but disposability places them in a position of singular disadvantage relative to other groups within the social organization of labor once hired. Although much has been made of migrants’ dual frame of reference for evaluating conditions “here” relative to conditions “there, (Waldinger and Lichter 2003), my fieldwork taught me that Latina/o migrants – unauthorized or authorized – are not always the happily willing subordinates they are imagined to be. And, in fact, their deep grievances are of critical importance for understanding their relations with African Americans, and perhaps for grasping their emergent sense of group position within the American system of racial and class stratification.

The vulnerabilities of “illegality” do not just apply to unauthorized workers, though they do so more severely and more consequentially for them. This is especially the case in the current sociopolitical environment, when U.S. immigration enforcement policies have intensified both at

the border and in the interior, inaugurating a third era of mass deportations and workplace raids (Hagan, Rodríguez, and Castro 2011). In the hustle and bustle of a factory, supervisors can and do treat other group ascriptions, like being Latino/a, as shorthand for the kinds of people that approximate those associated with some trait, namely illegality. This was plainly evident one day when Claudia asked me to accompany her to the supervisors' office so I could translate her message to our superintendent George. I inform George that Claudia has gotten a special permission from the Human Resources office for a month-long leave of absence. She is not required to inform George personally, and George notes this, telling her how much he appreciates that she bothered to let him know. But then he asks "Where is she going?" She says to tell him she is going to her country, El Salvador. A sly smile forms on his face, and George asks "Is she going to be able to get back in the country?" Understanding full well his insinuation that she lacked authorization to enter the country legally, I translated for Claudia, and she answered simply "yes." Perhaps unconvinced, George adds with a laugh "Because if she can't get back in, tell her I know someone who will marry her." As we walk out, she tells me George has a nephew that works in the Shipping Department who has always liked her. Claudia has Temporary Protected Status, which means she may be given permission by immigration authorities to travel to and from El Salvador and has work authorization. She has worked in the same department for 9 years, yet her head supervisor cannot shake the idea that Claudia is unauthorized.

The vulnerabilities of "illegality" were quite literally embodied in Cristina's pain and injuries - the inflamed tendons in her wrists, the chronic back pain, the stiffness in her neck. Cristina had never sought medical attention in two years of work, despite paying for the company insurance, or even visited the company nurse, for fear of finding herself on the short

list for firing. Indeed, Myrna, the Human Resources recruiter, warned unauthorized workers that given the increasingly stringent enforcement of employment verification requirements, it was better for them to "take care of their jobs," and to avoid seeing the nurse or making complaints to the HR office. "For what?" she admonished Cristina's relative Ileana about visiting the company nurse. "To rub people the wrong way? It's better to take it." Because she knew she was especially disposable, anticipating that any moment her papers would turn out bad, Cristina never missed work or used the days off she accumulated, figuring she better earn a check working as many hours as possible while she has a job. Within a few weeks of working with Cristina at the rib-trimming table, I had told her about my research. She was, I believe, unsure at first whether I was some kind of undercover police agent, but I gained her trust precisely by entrusting her with this information about me.

Because I had been having problems with my fingers due to repetitive motion injury and over-exertion, I had visited the nurse and later several doctors. Over this period of time, we talked extensively at our work table about this process, and about things like workers' compensation and the workplace rights of undocumented workers. Cristina would stretch out her arm and grimace from the pain in her tendons, wrist, and back. Sometimes she and Rosa would have me grab hold of their wrists and pull as though I were yanking their hands off their worn hinges. Sometimes, I would rub her shoulders, neck, and back through the thick layers of sweaters, giving momentary relief to the immiserating pain. She began to visit the company nurse after our shift was over, and began to contemplate making a doctor's appointment, but she was afraid. Daniel and Hernán, who frequently worked at a table with us, mocked our conversations, dismissing my explanations of undocumented workers' rights as "pure lies." "You see! It's because of these guys that I haven't been to the nurse this whole time!" she snapped at

them. I was struck by the dissuasive influence they had on her in terms of quelling her interest in learning about her rights as an undocumented worker and discouraging her from pursuing those rights. But Cristina finally made an appointment with a doctor, and her voice quivered with fright as she gave "her" social security number and details to the receptionist over the phone. She told me that she hated lying. She did go to a doctor, but that would be the only time, since her worst fear, which she nonetheless never really anticipated, would become a reality.

On a Friday at the end of July, my morning started off badly. I woke up late, for the first time since I'd started working at the factory. I had to be at work at 6:30 but didn't make it onto the floor until around 6:45. Every morning as we arrived to the floor and settled into our work stations, Cristina and I would exchange greetings. "Buenos Días!" she would exclaim loudly and cheerfully, and I'd respond "Buenos Días, alera [Honduran slang for friend], how are you?" "Good, did you sleep well?" This morning, Cristina is surprised when I get to the floor late. "What happened? I was worried, I told Gerardo to go get my phone and call you to see if something happened, because you live by yourself, and he joked that no, you live with the cat." During the unofficial morning bathroom break that we ended up going to at the same time, we talked again about my being late and how worried she had been. When we went on our official morning break at 9:30, Cristina waited for me to catch up to her as we streamed out towards the cafeteria, a cold and hungry army of workers, and held my hand as we walked together, wanting me to feel her icy hands, our hands interlocking in a lingering clasp.

Back on the production floor after breakfast, I was dumping a heavy tub of meat trimmings into a tank when I noticed that Cristina was under the stairwell to the supervisors' office, and George was telling her something. I didn't think anything of it. I figured he was giving her instructions, or telling her to go work on a different line. A little while later, Rosa told

me that George told Cristina she was wanted up in Human Resources. Immediately we were worried, as unauthorized workers assumed that being wanted in HR meant they were going to be fired or worse. But then La Madrina, an elderly Salvadoran worker, assured us that Cristina was having her hearing checked. After a while of feeling at ease with this, it occurred to me that she had already had her hearing checked in April, the week of "Cristina's" birthday, which is when the company nurse gave workers their annual hearing test.

A sinking dread, a horrible sensation of alarm came back. I worked at different points in the morning with Claudia, who kept coming to help me bag ribs because work at the *tortuga* machine was slow. I was getting really worried because Cristina had left at around 11:00, lunchtime was approaching, and she was not yet back. Claudia was calm. "Aaahhh, I'm not worried, don't worry, what's there to be worried about? You worry when someone's sick, or something happens, when your kids are sick." She told me about her son's recent bicycle accident. "I don't have kids so let me worry about other people," I snapped at her. "Why don't you worry about my kids then," she suggested dryly. We went on lunch break and Cristina was nowhere to be seen. I kept asking Rosa and La Madrina if they had seen her, but they had not. We went back on the floor, close to 1:00 and still Cristina was not back. Claudia was bagging ribs with me, and little by little information began leaking through the rumor mill to us that police had been at the factory. And then it was confirmed. She had been hauled away. Somebody told someone on the line and it came down the information pipeline. Cristina had been taken away by police in handcuffs.

My heart sank. My mind raced with flashbacks to all these conversations that we had had about everything going on in Arizona, even the day before. I recalled her really right-below-the-surface-but-always-there feeling that she was being persecuted, her sense of fear and dread and

anxiety and confusion, her incessant questions. It all just flooded me. Claudia, then she was worried. I squatted down to hide among the steel and boxes, and called Cristina's house on my cell phone. Her 12-year old daughter picked up. "Where's your mom?" "She's in jail," the girl said flatly. I kept working with Claudia. I wondered if workers were going to do anything or say anything or what was going to happen.

I was feeding Claudia ribs, and my eyes welled up with tears. Adrienne, a young African American worker, looked over from where she was bagging Safeway. She asked "What's wrong, Janet? What's wrong?" I broke down crying. I put my head down for a second, resting my arm on the pile of ribs in the pan. Claudia hit me on the hard hat with a rib, telling me to stop crying and to get it together. "If you're going to be like this, you should leave," she said. At 2:30 I saw George and told him I had an emergency and needed to go. He looked at me, with his cockeyed smile said "I'm not going to give you a point, let me just see what time it is." I was sure he knew why I was leaving. Cristina and I had run into him and his wife at WalMart one day so he knew we were friends. So I left, spending the rest of the day with Cristina's husband Ernesto trying to find a lawyer and collect money and property titles for bond, all the while unsure whether my friend was going to be released or transferred to the custody of ICE. When her husband and I posted bond and she is released from jail at midnight, her long, jet-black hair still wet and her eyes calm, tired, but wide awake, I could not help but be amused as she recounted how when the police officer told her she was under arrest for identity theft, she told him that couldn't be because she had bought the papers not stolen them. The disciplining features of illegality, which at work are transmitted through the mechanism of disposability, are communicated with great force in the community beyond the workplace through the mechanism of deportability.

Latina/o migrants struggle to survive in "the prison" that is work at Swine's and in the "cage of gold" that is life outside the factory gates. As Ana, an unauthorized Honduran worker told me, police harass them constantly, putting up license checkpoints in places Latinos are likely to travel through, making her fearful to leave her home. And yet it could be worse, since Clark County is one of the few in this region that have not enlisted in the 287(g) program, which deputizes local law enforcement to exercise authority on immigration matters (Gill 2010; Weissman et al 2009). Ana's sense of defeat is echoed by Cristina's in-law Ileana, who tells me that "Before people emigrated from there to here, but now we have to emigrate from here to there." She fears losing her job at Swine's because she has heard that not even the hog farms will hire workers without papers these days. Adriana was fortunate enough not to have been arrested like Cristina. But this seemed to be of little consolation to her when I saw her crying as she emptied her locker the day she was told by Human Resources staff that her papers were no good and she was fired, only weeks before Cristina's ordeal. Cristina herself, now confined to taking care of working parents' children for what amounts to pennies per hour in her home, views her entire migration experience with regret. Her son she left in Honduras has probably lost his love for her and for what, she says, she would not have starved to death if she had stayed there. Workers like Cristina, Adriana, and Ana are the most disposable workers because they were never really (supposed to be) there in the first place.[53] In the next section, I discuss how the costs of being *hispano* radiate beyond the group, constraining cross-racial solidarity in resisting oppressive exploitation.

"MORENOS HAVE TO WORK LIKE WE DO:" COLLECTIVE ACTION AS A RACE TO THE BOTTOM

[53] Some readers may draw the conclusion that employer sanctions "work." I would qualify this interpretation in several respects, and in the Conclusion chapter I suggest a different course of action.

Because supervisors applied to the broader group the expectations for labor subordination designed with reference to a uniquely vulnerable kind of worker, the disciplinary functions of "illegality" shaped the working conditions of all Latina/o migrants. The liabilities entailed by other ethnoracial attributes that characterized the group – namely, not being "from here" and having limited English-speaking skills – also played a role in their subjection. For Latina/o migrants unhappy with these working conditions, the disciplinary functions of "illegality" and the silencing effect of not being English-fluent in turn circumscribed their ability to openly challenge labor subordination. Latina/o workers were often ready and willing to talk back to supervisors, but found themselves quite literally bereft of words, their rebellious urge smoldering inside. On several occasions, Latina workers discussed the possibility of presenting their complaints about working conditions, including supervisor mistreatment, to HR personnel. As these workers knew, it was important to present these complaints collectively as a group, rather than as individuals, who may then be singled out for retaliation. These enthusiastic surges of courage were usually short-lived, succumbing within moments to the discouraging sense of certainty that others wouldn't dare to join because they didn't have papers and would be too afraid, or stifled by the dissuasive influence of Latinos who thought resistance was folly. Most Latina/o workers, including Cristina, Reina, Leticia, Ana, and even Claudia, expressed their support for a union at Swine's, regardless of their authorization status. But most of them felt there was too much at stake for them to take action, especially since the increasingly stringent employment verification requirements and the slow purge of unauthorized workers meant they were biding their time until it was their turn.

Given the objective and perceptual conditions I have laid out, perhaps it was inevitable that of the few instances of collective action in which Latina workers sought redress for their

oppressive working conditions, the target quickly shifted from improving the conditions of work to demanding that African Americans be subjected to the same labor discipline regime as they were. In the dog-eat-dog world of Swine's, challenging the structure of power on the shop floor that dictates the conditions under which workers labor is a more daunting task, perhaps more distant-seeming than the immediate injustice that is protested when Latinos perceive African American workers to be advantaged.

One afternoon in May, two months into my job in Loin Boning, I got called up to the superintendent's office. George, the black superintendent of loin boning, wanted me to translate for several groups of workers, most of whom were Spanish speakers. He delivered a speech to each consecutive group with declining enthusiasm, explaining that production levels were not going to decrease (as most people expected for the Summer) and that work hours were going to stay the same – brutally long. "This is a profit-making company, and we're the only plant making money right now so this is where production is going to be. You all have three options: transfer to another department that isn't even making 40 hours, stay put, or leave." To drive home the point, he repeated "it's all about the bottom line." In the third group of workers, Lupe, a Mexican woman who worked on the loin-bagging line, complained that there needed to be more people on the line to avoid work getting backed up. Workers were annoyed that Itty, a black man in his sixties who had worked here for forty years and was delegated supervisory functions even though he was a regular worker, took workers off the loin bagging line to do other tasks, which only caused the work to get backed up. "Why don't you tell Itty to bag them then?" George replied flippantly. When Lupe brought up the need to rotate loin packers and ribs packers, because bagging loins an entire shift was extremely grueling, he feigned ignorance about the idea of job rotations. George finishes by telling the group to put their concerns and

suggestions in writing, which would "force him to respond." Lupe and several others asked me to draft a letter on behalf of the packing workers. They knew I was well-educated, could read and write English, did not have kids or a spouse to care for, and was more "from here" than they were given I was a citizen, factors which they felt made me better suited to the task.

On a break in the bathroom, I approached Lupe with a draft of my letter which I read to her as others gather around. She kept voicing agreement, and Doris joined her lividly "Absolutely!" Lupe, Doris, Natalia, and other Latinas became quite animated, saying they wanted me to include that "Hispanics aren't treated the same as *morenos*, and *morenos* can work the way they want, and if Hispanics are standing around they get yelled at but *morenos* don't get yelled at." These workers agreed that "*Morenos* have to work like we do. They [supervisors] don't say anything to them, and give them easy jobs, let them leave early." Immediately I felt some dread at my dilemma. Someone said "If supervisors looked at who did all the different jobs they'd see that the blacks have all the easiest jobs and Hispanics have the hardest." Later, I was helping Ximena (Guatemalan) and Elsie (Honduran) pack bellies and Ximena tells me, after bringing up the letter to George, "If you just look around, you could see so many *morenos* just standing around, but if you or I did that we'd quickly get yelled at." To make her point clear, she pointed to several black workers who were standing around talking.[54]

[54] This episode of collective action, rare as it was, presented a serious dilemma for me, both as a researcher and as a person committed to equality. On the one hand, I was initially excited that workers felt driven to act together to protest conditions of work, even if it took the form of a letter rather than some more radical tactic. But as their concerns shifted from asking for changes to the labor process to denouncing black workers' supposedly advantaged position and demanding that they be equally subordinated to them, my enthusiasm plummeted. I mulled my response to Latino/a workers about this issue, even as the letter I drafted omitted any mention of black workers. Ultimately, I did not have to face the dilemma – either by silencing Latino/a workers claims of black privilege or somehow perpetuating a problematic dynamic involving Latino/a and African American workers - because the collective effort collapsed. Latina workers could not agree on what else the letter should ask for, or whether they should sign it, and talk of submitting the letter soon fizzled.

Latino workers were quick to protest what they saw as the privileged treatment African American workers received, and even mobilized as a group to demand that African Americas be subjected to the same level of oppressive exploitation that they were. But sometimes Latina/o workers recognized that their own internalization of the logic of exploitation at Swine's, or at the very least their powerlessness to contest their disposability, made the group complicit in its oppression. Reina felt that moreover African American workers had the advantage of solidarity. Latino workers, on the other hand, united in the experience of shared subordination, were beset by the pressures to conform to oppressive exploitation that in-group members placed on their fellow Latino workers. I asked Reina how she thought *negros*, *hispanos*, and *blancos* got along at work.

> "Well, among the *moyos*, they shelter one another. And *hispanos*, as I told you before, there's always that selfishness [egoísmo]. Instead of getting along, trying to backstab, to point the finger at someone. Yes, instead of helping you, of being united, the *hispano* is actually selfish. Instead of helping you, the *hispano* tries to drag you down. He isn't united [*unido* (solidaristic)]. The *hispano* that is *unido* is rare. It's rare. Always selfish. You see it in Packing. If you're standing around, one of the women will say "Look at so and so doing nothing, she's standing there doing nothing!" It bothers her that you're standing around. "Qué haragana! Qué huevona"! [What a lazy ass!]. But then you notice that the *morenas* – if a *moya* sees another *moya* standing there, she won't say anything to her. They're more *unidas*. That's why I say that it's our own fault."

Cristina gave an explanation for how *negros* and *hispanos* got along at work that clearly demonstrated an awareness of Latino/a and African American workers' differing views on what Waldinger and Lichter (2003) have termed "the proper equation between effort and reward," which caused frictions between them.

> Because they don't like to work alongside you. The truth is that they – I don't know if it's that they don't work, or if it's that they can't or don't want to. But they say that they're not going to kill themselves working for so little. They say they don't earn enough to kill themselves. And that when it's overtime, they don't work the same as during the day. When it's overtime, they don't like to work the way they work during normal hours. It's

> slower. They say that they don't need to be rushed, they say, because it's past the eight hour workday.

And yet, asked how she personally got along with African American workers, Cristina articulated a nuanced response that profoundly illustrates the ways in which her own racialized resentment of African American workers was tied to her own internalization of the logic of capitalist exploitation, which caused her to submit to her subordinate position in the workplace.

> "I didn't dislike them. Sometimes I told them they were lazy [*haraganes*], that they didn't work. But it was never that I didn't like them. I've never disliked them. Racist, no…Well, yeah, they follow their own rules. They do what they want. The truth is that if they don't work, and we work, it's our fault. That's what I think. It's our own fault working more than they do. Sometimes, they do demand more of us. But it's up to our bodies what we can take. What happens is that sometimes we strain our bodies beyond the strength we have for working, when we like to work. So of course, if we're tired and the other person isn't doing anything, that's when we don't like it. But the truth is, they say "You work if you want to work. Leave me alone. What are you looking at me for?" And sometimes they're right because nobody has a knife to our back to make us work faster. Sometimes I would tell myself to work slower, because that way I leave work well-rested. But after a little while I would forget. Until a while later I would remember again. But sometimes one's body just can't be without working."

Latinos at Swine's develop a group identity that is mired in struggles for dignity and status, a struggle most immediately mounted vis-à-vis the group they most overlap with in the social class, a group whose position within the social organization of labor at Swine's appears to upend the racialized moral hierarchy that Latin American migrants expect. Latinos' position as embittered subordinates unites them across national lines, muting such distinctions in favor of a panethnoracial identification as *hispanos*.[55] Yet, we must not read such reactive solidarity in

[55] Latinos at Swine's, as elsewhere, comprise a diversity of nationalities and other subjectivities. But with few exceptions, most Latina/o workers de-emphasized internal heterogeneity. For example, a Honduran worker explains: "I think we're all the same [hispanos]. But the Mexican and the Honduran doesn't get along too well, I don't know why. But I've never had problems with anybody." Clara, one of the minority of Mexican workers at Swine's, was among the few Latina/o workers I spoke with that made any substantial reference to within group boundaries. "I get there and I'm Mexican, and the majority of them are from Honduras. Someone comes by and says "Ah, you can tell

overly rosy tones. Some workers, like Leticia, Reina, and Cristina, may not even refer to such a shared sense of group identity as solidarity at all, making cross-racial solidarities perhaps even harder to attain. In the next section, I account for the ethnoracial composition of the Loin Boning and Packing department in order to substantiate Latinos' perceptions that groups occupy different positions within the social organization of labor at Swine's.

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF LABOR: PERCEPTIONS ARE REALITY?

Let's lay out the ethnoracial composition within the social organization of labor. While I worked in the Loin Boning and Packing department, the total number of workers was approximately 200. Usually, this was broken down as: 3 loin, shoulder, and belly de-boning lines consisting of about 20-25 workers each, 2 ham-end de-boning lines consisting of about 25 workers, 2 butt de-boning lines consisting of about 15 workers, several loin and tenderloin bagging lines consisting of about 15 workers, ribs trimming and bagging lines consisting of about 10 workers, several box packing lines consisting of about 15 workers, 4 *tortuga* operators, 2-5 saw operators, and 3-5 jack drivers. The remainder would be assigned to work at various positions on different days. Around 25 percent of these workers were African American. Of this 25 percent, 69 percent had worked at the plant for at least a year (N=25/36). This suggests that there is a stable core of African Americans working at Swine's and a smaller number of positions that turn over multiple times.

Of great significance as will become clearer in Chapter Six, the authority structure in this department was identified as predominantly black. In addition, Itty and TJ, both long-time

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she's Mexican." Hilda is my friend and she is Honduran. But in that first month that I was alone I only talked with Cristina. Then Hilda started working there and we have been friends. But there's always that talk among them about Mexicans. Because Mexican women don't wear make-up, and they say we're more Indian. So sometimes you're just better off staying quiet. We're compañeras at work but sometimes it's better if you just keep your distance. Even the way we talk is different among *hispanos*. I didn't say anything because my need was greater. I felt discrimination but from the Hondurans."

African American employees, held positions as "worker-supervisors," a term I use to refer to workers who, despite not being classified officially as supervisors are given a mostly supervisory role in the delegation and coordination of work. It is perhaps also the case that among regular workers, blacks were more likely than Latinos to be assigned to more coveted and less onerous jobs. Shameela, Patricia, and Jeremy had all been given assistant-type jobs after some period of doing straight or whizzard knife work. On the ham line where 20 Latinas used straight knives to de-bone ham ends, Coreen had the job of bagging these hams at the end of the line. Bess, Eileen, and Susie worked the whizzard knife trimming fat off loins at the end of the line. Ten of the thirty-six black (28 percent) workers had been assigned primarily to the ribs station, considered by most workers to be somewhat lighter work compared to loins, shoulders, and bellies, even though ribs station jobs accounted for only about 10 percent of all jobs in this department. Close to half of ribs station workers at any given time were African Americans. The concentration of African Americans in certain jobs and not others in the Loin Boning and Packing Department suggests that Latinos' perceptions about their advantage have some basis in objective conditions. Yet, it is important to remember that these "advantages" are only construed as such in relation to the position that Latino/a workers tend to occupy as a group. These are also "advantages" that would seem minor to an outside observer, but that take on extraordinary significance to workers who face on a daily basis some of the harshest working conditions imaginable.

CONCLUSION

Although it is not necessary for subjective experience to faithfully reflect objective conditions, in this case, it is likely that as a general statement, African Americans *as a group* occupy a *relatively* more favorable position in the workplace than do Latinos. Many Latina workers, especially in the super-exploitative Loin Boning department, feel they are treated

differently than black workers, that supervisors set higher bars in terms of work performance, that labor discipline is more stringent upon them, that they are more surveilled by supervisors and their agents, that they are given harder jobs, that they are at a disadvantage when it comes to a supervisor deciding between pleasing a black worker and pleasing a Latino worker. The fact that these supervisors were African American only solidified Latina workers' perception that black workers were given preferential treatment, a topic I will return to in Chapter Six. Given their perceptions, which in fact correspond with the expectations of these groups' relative positions in the literature on ethnic succession and employer preferences,[56] Latina workers ascribe to black workers the qualities of receiving unearned privileges and being lazy in an effort to even out their statuses - at least symbolically, filling in the initial boundary drawn boldly against American blacks via an elaborate array of symbolic resources that relentlessly designate them using ethnoracial forms of identification, and which frequently acquire pejorative significance. The compliant, subordinate hard worker does not exist in itself. Supervisors continually hone that compliance to their demands, and these Latina/o workers are extremely resentful, but the immediate objects of their resentment are black *workers*. Latina/o workers understand their subordinate status to be tied to their own vulnerability as non-English-speaking immigrant workers, some of whom are particularly handicapped by their lack of work authorization. But in the frenzy of fifteen-hour work days at Swine's, this understanding recedes into the background next to what they see as the more favorable treatment *black* workers receive. Perhaps unable to imagine that Swine's could ever operate as anything more than a prison, where working conditions might be improved for everyone and especially for them, Latina/o workers insist that African Americans be subject to the same unrelenting labor discipline regime.

[56] Employers may prefer to hire immigrants over native-born workers because they are viewed as the ideal subordinates. But for the same reason, it could be hypothesized that *once hired* native-born workers are situated relatively more favorably than immigrants within the social organization of labor.

CHAPTER 6

BLACK, WHITE, AND LATINO BOSSES: HOW THE COMPOSITION OF THE AUTHORITY STRUCTURE MEDIATES PERCEPTIONS OF PRIVILEGE AND THE EXPERIENCE OF SUBORDINATION

One afternoon, my work was slow at the ribs so I intermittently went to second-seat my Salvadoran friend Claudia at the Tortuga, the machine that vacuum seals bagged meat. We were chatting, passing the time, when she tells me: "When I leave this job, before I go I'm going to say to Michael "bye stupid nigger." I responded in shock. "What?!" "That's what I'm going to say. Goodbye stupid nigger! You are a stupid nigger!" After repeating this over and over, she says to me: "They don't like when you say that, right?" "No," I responded. She went on, railing against Michael. Conversations like this with Claudia and others could be tough for me, and on this day, I grew impatient. "I'll never understand why *hispanos* here see the mistakes blacks make so clearly, but when whites make mistakes, they're totally blind t it. And whites are the ones who have power, they're the ones wanting to deport them and pass laws against them. They're the ones who really want to oppress *hispanos* and migrants!" In a moment of seriousness – this whole conversation was all the more frustrating because Claudia thought it was hilarious – she says: "Janet, the thing is that from my point of view it's *them* here at work."

Although she did not recognize the ugly history within which the "nigger" slur is embedded, Claudia knew this was a pejorative designation for African Americans. Availing herself of an opportunity to malign Michael, our African American supervisor whom she detested, Claudia's comments suggest that, whereas she must inhabit a subordinate status while she is employed at Swine's, if she were to leave the job she would exact her revenge, bidding farewell to Michael with this most insulting slur. Her explanation in a moment of seriousness

conveys clearly that from her perspective, African Americans – not whites – are the real oppressors at Swine's.[57]

In this chapter, I examine how the composition of the authority structure mediates the intergroup dynamics I have described in previous chapters. At Swine's, African Americans have made small in-roads into positions of authority at the level of the shop floor, mostly as crew leaders but also as department supervisors, and less so as division superintendents. Latinos have made fewer in-roads, and whites still dominate most supervisory positions as well as higher levels of management at Swine's. Given the dynamics I have discussed in the preceding chapters, it is important to consider how the ethnoracial composition of the authority structure conditions intergroup relations on the shop floor. In particular, I show how an African American-dominated authority structure exacerbates Latino/a workers' perceptions of African American workers' privilege and this resentment is again expressed in racialized terms. While I worked in the Loin Boning and Packing department, the authority structure shifted from African American-dominated to white-dominated. Therefore, I had the opportunity to study how this shift affected

[57] Claudia asks me what the word "nigger" means. I explained it was a horrible word, with a terrible history of oppression. But what was the story, she asked me. I said it wasn't about a particular story, but rather about a long history of oppression of blacks in this country. Claudia knew it was a hurtful slur, which was why she had uttered it in reference to our African American floor supervisor Michael, whom she detested. But she did not understand why "nigger" was such a violently unspeakable slur. I told her there was not really an equivalent term for Latinos. She countered "But people can call me wetback, illegal, undocumented, and I don't care, it doesn't hurt me." As others have found (Marrow 2011), Latinos seem to have little knowledge of the tumultuous racial history of the American South. On MLK day in 2011, I was cooking dinner with Claudia and Sara when they thanked Martin Luther King for "freeing the slaves," and for which they get a holiday from work (I tried to clarify that MLK did not free the slaves but they showed no interest in a history lesson). On MLK day in 2012, I was again with Claudia and Sara at Claudia's trailer. I noticed a catered cake on the table when I arrived, and asked what it was for. The two of them joked that it was in celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday. Their banter then deteriorated, returning to the slave theme in the context of turning the authority relations at work on their head: "I wish they were still slaves. I would whip the hell out of Michael!" At other times, though, Claudia seemed more sympathetic to the idea that African Americans in positions of authority face resistance in the white-dominated echelons of power at Swine's. On separate occasions, she noted that George seemed marginalized by the white superintendent and supervisors of the Cut Floor, and she thought this was because he is black.

Latinos' perceptions about how the composition of the authority structure magnifies or undermines the privileged position that African American workers are presumed to enjoy.

Most Latinos perceived that the new white superintendent was fair, treating all workers equally [*parejo*], unlike his predecessor. Some workers celebrated a white superintendent because this meant that finally "*morenos* [would] have to work like we do." The implicit association between whiteness and fairness – meaning that all workers would be treated the same – ran strong among Latino/a workers. Ultimately, however, because the white superintendent intensified labor discipline and redoubled the oppressive exploitation of *all* workers, a few Latina/o workers showed signs of redirecting their grievances from racialized resentment of African American workers' privileged position to the deterioration of working conditions for all. Very little research has considered the role of the composition of the authority structure in shaping intergroup relations, even though this is a key dimension of the social organization of labor.[58]

In the first section, I discuss Latina/o workers' perception that the privileged status of African American workers was augmented when African Americans also occupied positions of authority, especially when they were at the helm of the authority structure in the Loin Boning and Packing Department. In the second section, I discuss how their perceptions were affected when the African American superintendent of Loin Boning, George, was replaced by a white superintendent, Don. In the third section, I show that rather than viewing *hispanos* who occupy

[58] Much of the research on the composition of the authority structure in workplaces studies its effects on outcomes such as the wages of workers of particular racial or gender status (See, for example, Cohen and Huffman on women in managerial positions).

positions of authority more favorably than either whites or African Americans, some Latina/o workers singled them out as the most oppressive supervisors of all.[59]

LATINO/A WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES ON AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN-DOMINATED AUTHORITY STRUCTURE: THEY FAVOR *MORENOS* "BECAUSE THEY ARE THE SAME RACE"

Much as her comments in the encounter that opens this chapter suggest, Claudia is certain that Michael, the African American floor supervisor, and George, the African American superintendent, give preferential treatment to black workers.

> "Michael shows favoritism towards *morenos*. The jobs for the *morenos* are less difficult. And he will never turn down a *moreno's* request for permission to leave work. I think Michael is racist. Same as George. He can see a *moreno* being lazy and he won't say anything to them. Michael fired Don Anselmo [an older Latino worker] a few weeks ago when he refused to stay late, which he would not have done to a *moreno*. Poor Don Anselmo threatened to have his good friend Arnold Schwartzenegger intervene on his behalf!"

Cristina too is certain that black supervisors will treat black workers differently, more favorably than they will treat Latinos. In her explanation, the "favoritism" shown by black supervisors towards black workers is based on their supposed understanding that black workers will do the work according to their own prerogatives, not those of any supervisor as will *hispano* workers.

> "If a *negro* is a supervisor and has workers on the line that are the same race, they treat them differently. Because they know how they are, and they know that if they say

[59] The department superintendent was African American, and one of two floor supervisors was black (the other, Luis, was Puerto Rican, but he quit shortly after I transferred. The position was vacant until January 2011 after I had left, when Javier was hired. Javier is Mexican and had worked as a supervisor at Berkshire Chicken alongside Don, the white superintendent who took over when the African American superintendent, George, was pushed out in October 2010. Word is that Don got the plant to hire his buddy Luis – the two live together as well – and Don got hired because he is friends with Larry Mendosa, the HR manager. Before the Puerto Rican supervisor, Luis, there was a Mexican supervisor named Carlos, who is married to the Salvadoran boning line worker Emma, ex-sister-in-law of my buddy Claudia, but was let go when his papers "turned out bad." Emma befriended Don (as did Claudia, in a way, since he has a crush on her) and Don spends practically every weekend socializing with Emma and Carlos, and frequently attends Claudia's parties or invites her to his). None of the crew leaders on the main boning floor were black (Jim, African American, was crew leader in the little boning room that mostly trimmed jowls, located in a different part of the plant).

> something to them they're not going to change. But we are [going to change how we do the work]."

Clara, among the minority of Mexican workers at Swine's, was unequivocal in her belief that supervisors gave African American workers privileged treatment. Moreover, she tied this differential treatment to her belief that supervisors – and African Americans in general – assumed that all *hispanos* lacked authorization, and were therefore more inclined to accept poor working conditions.

> "They don't stick the *morenos* from here [the U.S.] on the line.[60] Because they can't take it. There are very few *morenos* on the line. But there's always that racism [from African Americans], because they know we are not from here. And because for them every *hispano* doesn't have papers."

Ana, a Honduran worker in her forties, turns quickly to her perception that African American workers receive privileged treatment from supervisors, especially from African American supervisors, when I ask her how Latino and black workers get along. And like Clara, she also feels that African Americans view Latinos as outsiders who do not belong.

> "Not very well. Most *morenos* look at us *hispanos* like we're strange insects…Like you have to be from here [the U.S.] to be viewed favorably. There are plenty of *morena* people that have a good heart, but there are people who have a bad heart. I've seen it and experienced it. We have some *morenas* that work with us. If they don't want to do something…When I first started working there I had problems with some *morenas* because they lost a cell phone…"

After accusing Ana of stealing their phone, a misunderstanding exacerbated by the language barrier, Ana was taken to the supervisor's office to speak to George, the African American superintendent of Loin Boning and Packing.

> "George became angry because they had wanted to beat me up. George got angry because he knew deep down that I wasn't capable of stealing a cell phone, nor did I speak

[60] She says that "Now the *morenos* that you see on the line are from Haiti. I see that the people from Haiti are very solidaristic [*unidos*], they stick together, unlike what I see with either Mexicans or Hondurans. And between us and them there's no communication because neither of us speaks English and they speak French."

> English well enough to tell them that I had it [as they claimed I had]. George had a talk with both of the women because they said they were going to wait for me in the parking lot to beat me up. I was going to fuck them both up! When I was leaving work, I took my *chaira* [sharpening steel] with me. Actually, George accompanied me to my car. But I was still ready with my *chaira*. And he told me to put it away. But I didn't believe him, since they're the same race. So yes, you encounter a lot of problems with *morena* people."

Even though George took her side in the matter, refusing to believe the black workers' accusations, Ana had nevertheless suspected he would take their side, since they were "the same race." Her comments also resonate with the strong feelings of exclusion from American Americans that Latinos have reported in other studies (Marrow 2011). Like some of the Latinos interviewed by Marrow in North Carolina, who prefaced their views about how African Americans treat them with a balanced assessment of the group as a whole, Ana vacillates between saying that some African Americans have a "good heart" and some have a "bad heart." But the thrust of Ana's comments suggests, much like Marrow finds among her Latino respondents, that she feels African Americans treat Latinos as foreigners who do not belong – "strange insects" who are not "from here."

In eleven years of employment at Swine's, Leslie, a Honduran worker, has *never* gotten a point for missing work, a feat that is beyond spectacular. She is happy to report that supervisors do not give her a particularly hard time. Although she notes that supervisors harangue workers for going to the bathroom, she blames workers who take too long for bringing this discipline on themselves. Nevertheless, Leslie has no doubt that supervisors treat *negros* preferentially and that *hispanos* always get the most tongue lashings. She felt this was the case especially when the department was run by an African American, George, even though George never treated her poorly.

> "I've never been treated badly. They [supervisors] know who they're going to chew out. But sometimes there are people, workers, who take advantage. Let's say now, they're

> controlling who goes to the bathroom and when. I only go for like five or seven minutes, but others will be in the bathroom for twenty minutes…Like I said, supervisors fulfill their obligations. Sometimes they go overboard. They treat people badly. But they are also being pressured. Sometimes I think that there is preference. There are people who don't do anything, just pass the time walking around. There's people there who just walk around and don't do anything. It used to be that there was favoritism towards the *negros*. With George. I would be lying if I said he ever scolded me. No supervisor has ever scolded me. The Americans – those *moyos* – had the easiest jobs and they paid more, supposedly. And for us *hispanos* it has always been more – you can see the racism towards us *hispanos*. Because they always scold *hispanos*, but never Americans, because of racism."

Leslie was certain that supervisors – especially African American supervisors – treated black workers preferentially on the shop floor, giving them easier and better paid jobs and scolding them less. She asserted this view despite the fact that she herself had never personally experienced it in how supervisors, African American or not, treated her. Regardless of whether Leslie developed this view by observing a pattern of treatment of which she was an exception, or whether Leslie merely internalized this view from the claims of other workers, it is a perception that informs her assessment of the status of African Americans in the workplace.

LATINO/A WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES ON A WHITE-DOMINATED AUTHORITY STRUCTURE: "THINGS ARE GOING TO BE EQUAL NOW"

The particularly *racialized* character of Latina/o workers' resentment becomes clear when a white superintendent takes over as head of the authority structure in the Loin Boning department. If Latina/o workers felt that black workers occupied a privileged position at Swine's because they shared, with all native-born workers, the advantages of being "from here" and especially of being *American*, then one would not expect their perceptions to change when a white superintendent took over. But this was not the case. The universal perception among Latinos was that a white superintendent, not sharing any *racial* affinity with blacks, would

negate some of the privilege they had previously enjoyed as *black* workers laboring under a *black* authority structure.

Clara lays out this general perception succinctly.

> "Donny is *parejo* [equal] with everyone. He doesn't care what you are, whereas George was more patient with the *morenos* and maybe demanded more of others. But not Donny. He is *parejo*. He punishes everyone the same. George wasn't *parejo* and Don is."

Natalia, a Honduran worker in her forties, framed the issue within the broader context of the dog-eat-dog world of surviving at Swine's.

> "There is a lot of selfishness. Because there [at Swine's] people don't care if they make you look bad or get you in trouble. There people are just out to save their own skin. They [supervisors] want *hispanos* to be working. If a *negro* doesn't want to work, they let him be. But now that Donny is there, he's *parejo*."[61]

And Leslie, who believed that African American and Latino/a workers were treated differently by George, the African American superintendent, even though she had never felt personally targeted, agrees that the climate has changed with Don.

> "It has changed because this American, this *bolillo*, now he is *parejo* with everyone. He scolds *negros*, *blancos*, and *hispanos* alike. I haven't heard people say anything about him, and he's never said anything to me. But I see that he comes down from his office to keep an eye on the work."

Interestingly, Cristina does not think that white supervisors would display the same biases as African American supervisors, if only because there are so few white workers at Swine's. In her explanation, then, whiteness is associated with fairness, but perhaps only because white supervisors lack a corresponding white workforce to whom they can show racial favoritism. Her comments imply that the affinity is *racial* not about shared status as Americans. She explains this

[61] Natalia notes that at Leslielac, a factory she previously worked at, things were different. "At Leslielac, there were more Americans. Things were *parejo* there because there weren't many *hispanos*, so who was going to do all the work?"

when I ask her whether the same affinity she thought existed between black supervisors and workers would exist if the supervisors were white.

> "If the supervisors are white? If they're American? I don't think they would have a preference, because there aren't many Americans there, same as them, who are white. For example, how many are there in Packing?"

For Claudia, who was blunt in her view that African American supervisors treated workers differently, and that they were especially oppressive in their treatment of Latinos, the shift to a white-dominated authority structure was an opportunity to rejoice. Like most other Latinos at Swine's, Claudia believed that Don was *parejo* with everyone. But whereas this new equality between workers – equality in being treated like animals[62] – caused some workers to redirect their attention away from the supposedly privileged position of African American workers and towards the deterioration of working conditions more generally, for Claudia things were different indeed. "Things have changed with Don." Seeing my great distress during our conversation in the encounter that opens this chapter, Claudia would later try to console me, saying she only hated two *negros*, presumably Michael and her co-worker at the Tortuga, Lauren, whom she despised. In fact, Claudia's *many* racial commentaries were altogether contradictory. If on this day, she distanced herself from making a claim to hate all blacks except for two, on other occasions she made blanket condemnations of African Americans. The weekend before our conversation at the Tortuga, we were at her house cooking *pollo en crema*, when she told me of her great delight at her perception that Rick was making African Americans work like everybody else.

[62] This is how Elsie put it. One afternoon, I was called upstairs to translate for Elsie and Don, who were in his office. He berated her for supposedly throwing backbones into the inedible vat without properly shaving every last bit of meat particle from them. She tried to defend herself in vain. Don told her she would do as she was told or she could turn in her knives. Elsie turned to me and exclaimed with outrage: "He talks to us like we're animals!"

> I have it up to my eyebrows with *moyos*. They don't work! And everyone has to work *parejo*. I like how Don is doing. I like how he is making everyone work. You see that Janice doesn't spend the whole "test" sitting down like she used to. George didn't care. He wouldn't say anything to her. Now she has to do something. That *moya* doesn't work. And the one at the machine doesn't work [her African American coworker at the Tortuga, Denise]. Now we'll see what she does.

I try to argue with her but she is quite charged, though she does offer her view of the exceptions to her general statements about African Americans.

> "It's not all of them. I'm not going to say it is. I think Thomas works hard. That *moyo* works hard. And Vincent, despite what anyone might say about him, he works. He's not a perfectionist but he gets the work out."

I tried to counter that there are not any lazy people who work at Swine's, that everybody works hard. I offered there were some people who killed themselves, but that it should be so that people don't have to work so hard. Illustrating precisely the sort of internalization of the logic of exploitation – Claudia is a veteran of Swine's, having worked there for ten years – Claudia makes it clear to me that the only option is for African Americans to work like "everybody" else. She defends Don's speed-up of the production process, telling me it is both good and necessary, and endorses Don firing workers that "don't want to work."

> "No! Everyone has to work the same. How are we ever going to leave work? We have to finish. And all of us have to work *parejo* for that to happen."

If the transformation of the authority structure made Claudia relish in delight at the prospect of African American workers have to work like "everybody" else, Reina responded to the changes brought about by the new white superintendent somewhat differently. Like everybody else, Reina was sure that now, unlike with George, all workers were treated equally. But she did not feel especially heartened, since now the working conditions at Swine's had gotten even more unbearable. Indeed, she intuited in the new superintendent's actions his intentions to squeeze workers even more and in doing so make himself look good to the higher-ups.

> "Right now, the new supervisor wants to be the hero. He wants to get people out earlier, not like George. Now he wants to get everyone out at 6:30 p.m. at the latest. But he's wanting to speed people up a lot. Now they don't want to let anyone go to the bathroom, especially the line workers. I don't think that's right. We haven't signed any paper that says we don't have the right to go to the bathroom. That is everyone's right. He doesn't want anybody to go to the bathroom because he wants to get the production out earlier. In other words, he wants to be the hero, not like George. This Don is a great friend of Larry's [the HR manager]. He didn't like George. They clashed. So I heard he pushed George out so that Don would take over. George would ask for more workers, but they would never give him more. But they do with Don, since he and Larry are friends. Do you think George wanted to leave work at 9:00 p.m.?"

She seemed to feel sympathetic to George, but still believed that "at the end he had become racist." Nevertheless, she views Don as merely self-interested, using workers to meet his ever-expanding goals for faster production.

> "George used to be different, but at the end he had become racist. He only protected the *negros*. He turned sort of racist. I imagine it's because since he is *negro*. Up to now, this guy Don is *parejo*. He's *parejo* with *moyos* and with *hispanos*. Because Don wants to look good. What he cares about is getting the production out earlier. At the end, I guess George didn't care since he could never come out looking good. This guy tries to look good. What he is concerned with is getting the production out. With me, this guy wanted me to keep packing bellies, but I refused because I'm pregnant. So while he is using people [he is nice to them]. But now that I'm in the condition I'm in [pregnant]…"

Even so, Latina/o workers like Reina who perceived a general deterioration of working conditions in the change to an authority structure headed by Don did not articulate their resentment in racialized terms. On the contrary, the articulation of racialized resentment of an African American-dominated authority structure was common, no doubt in part because *blacks* being in charge was thought to magnify the privileged position of *black* workers.

LATINO/A WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES ON LATINOS IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY: "THE *HISPANO* IS THE ONE THAT MAKES AMERICANS BEHAVE THAT WAY WITH US"

On the other hand, Latina/os do not necessarily have a more sanguine view of Latino supervisors. In fact, some Latino crew leaders and supervisors were widely despised by Latinos,

who expressed even greater dissatisfaction with their treatment of workers given that they were Latinos themselves. Interestingly, the only Latina worker who said she did not perceive differential treatment between *hispanos* and *negros* was Rita, a recent hire who had worked under white supervisors at hog farms in North Carolina for much of her time in the U.S. On the other hand, she was certain that *hispano* supervisors were the worst: "They want to humiliate the hispano. Among *hispanos*, we should get along, not treat each other like animals."

Reina, who as I discussed in Chapter 5 thinks that Latino/a workers lack solidarity, felt similarly betrayed by Latinos in positions of authority. Interestingly, her discussion of this followed on the heels of saying she wished Swine's had a union that would protect workers, especially *hispanos*.

> "The way they treat us and the way they treat Americans [is different]. Because they know that we put up with it. They try to humiliate you. There's another Pig Corporation where they have an organization. They have an organization that protects people, the union. My sister-in-law works there. I would like for one of those organizations to come here so that we would be protected, especially *hispanos*. Because there's a lot of discrimination here. They humiliate you. There is racism. The union protects people. The company is the one that doesn't protect you. The company people are the ones who are the corrupt exploiters. And I'm going to tell you. Sometimes it isn't so much the Americans, the owners of the company. Rather, sometimes it's other *hispanos*, who are selfish. You know Héctor. He's *hispano*, just like us. And he doesn't have papers either. He's Mexican and he works with Honduran papers. The *hispano* is the one that makes Americans behave that way with us the most. It is *hispanos* who stick the knife in you. The *hispano* isn't solidaristic [*unido*]. We should support each other, since we're all the same. Good for those who were able to fix their papers, but they might have family members who are in our same situation. But sometimes it goes to their head."

Clara also found *hispano* supervisors to be particularly "brutish," even a Mexican floor supervisor who had worked with and befriended Don at Berkshire Chicken and had been hired at Swine's at the same time.

> The new floor supervisor, Javier, walks around giving orders brutishly. Sometimes I think they demand more out of us. Too much! Even to go to the bathroom. It feels like we're in prison. You have to get permission to walk off the line. They scream at us and they don't even know the work. There are days when your knife is sharp, and it's good.

> But there are other days that, no matter how hard you try, you can't get your knife to sharpen.

Even Leslie protested that some Latino supervisors were especially abusive towards Latino workers. She mentioned this in regards to Héctor, the Mexican crew leader disliked by most workers, Latina/o and African American.

> "Héctor used to be bad, but he has changed because the Dominicans [several Dominican boning line workers] went to complain upstairs. It wasn't right, how he treated us, even with foul language. "*Pinches huevonas*!" [Fucking lazy asses!] he would say to them. And he would scream at you, but not anymore. He knows he has to take care of his job. If they fire the big-wigs, they'll fire a rat too!"

CONCLUSION

The demographic past and present of Swine's collide. While the highest levels of management have remained closed to blacks, blacks have made small in-roads into supervisory positions on the shop floor – long after the early 1990s when blacks were the vast majority of the regular workforce. It would be a mistake to overstate the access the positions in the authority structure that African Americans have achieved at Swine's. To my knowledge, Swine's has only one African American superintendent (George) for any of its five or six divisions (department groupings). At the level of department supervisor, of which there are about fifteen positions, maybe three to five are filled by African Americans. In other words, most superintendents and supervisors are white, and African Americans tend to be more concentrated at the level of crew leader, the lowest rung in the authority structure above regular production worker. But these small in-roads come at a time when the workforce has shifted and is now predominantly Latina/o.

Conventional sociological and economic analyses of the economic effects of immigrants on native-born workers posit the idea of complementarity as a beneficial feature that neutralizes

any possible negative effects (Smith and Edmonston 1997), a view also consistent with a version of ethnic succession through replacement dynamics. In other words, given differences in human capital, for example, a majority of native-born workers are poised to be "pushed up" by labor migrants whose low levels of human capital make them most suitable for bottom-rung positions. Yet, aside from the presumption that such a "complementarity" will be viewed as beneficial by everyone involved, it also obscures the possibility that grievances inherent to this arrangement will motivate the relationships among those so engaged. Indeed, this is precisely the social dynamic I observed, and one that other scholars have documented as well. A hotel manager interviewed by Waldinger (1997: 382) noted that when "the old black attendants," presumably those having long tenures, moved into floor supervisor positions as the regular workforce became predominantly Latino/a, this became "a source of tension."

If scholars are right to propose that African Americans – indeed, any group – are likely to do better on average when some of its members occupy positions of authority, then we would expect for this to be the same at Swine's (Cohen and Huffman 2006; Elliott and Smith 2004). For example, Cohen and Huffman (2006) show that having women in higher-level positions of authority improves the status of employed women and reduces gender inequality.[63] But even before we expected this dynamic to work for African Americans as *blacks*, we would expect it to work for them as *Americans*. Scholars who study low-wage employers attitudes towards different groups of workers have found that such employers view African Americans as having the same sense of entitlement to a certain effort-reward standard that they perceive from white workers, making native-born workers least suitable to work that involves the greatest subordination (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Whether this privileged treatment of black workers

[63] According to Cohen and Huffman (2007), research to date has been unable to operationalize models of the effects of minority access to authority positions on minority employees' status because of data limitations.

resulting in part from an African American-dominated authority structure reflects a real dynamic or whether it is merely Latinos' perception scarcely matters. What is important is that Latino workers at Swine's are certain that American blacks occupy a privileged position in the workplace, and that their positions of authority augment their status while contributing to disparities in treatment between Latina/o and African American workers. In this way, we confront a dilemma that appears to pit Latinos against African Americans – but once again, from the perspective of Latinos' interests, as they perceive them, not from the perspective of African Americans.

Some readers may wonder whether my analysis substantiates "split labor market theory," a Marxist-derived perspective that emphasizes the divide-and-conquer strategies pursued by capitalists as more or less intentional devices to discipline and isolate workers. Split labor market in particular highlights the role and interests of "privileged" workers in fueling group-based conflict among workers in order to ensure their group's higher status (Bonacich 1972; 1975; 1976). My findings suggest that managers need *not* be particularly active or intentional in the production of distinctions on the shop floor in order for these to be manifest and consequential. Of course, this may be happening as well, especially at the hiring phase when workers are initially assigned to different departments. Nor do "privileged" workers, in this case African Americans, need to be the primary drivers of conflict. This presumption again is founded on the narrow focus of researchers on competition-based threat, rather than other sources of conflict like those I have highlighted in this and the preceding two chapters.

CHAPTER 7

EXCLUSION OR AMBIVALENCE?: EXPLAINING AFRICAN AMERICANS' BOUNDARY-WORK

It was the end of July 2010, and Arizona's SB 1070 was making waves in the news and across Latino communities in the U.S. Cristina grew more anxious by the day, wondering aloud how these kinds of laws might make her life more difficult, and the ominous mood perhaps foreshadowed her imminent arrest. But work was work, and like any other day, on this day workers crowded around their raw material, chatting every so often to break up the disquieting monotony of ceaseless labor. Late in the afternoon, Cristina and Rosa were trimming extra-meaty baby back ribs at the table, and Linda, an older African American worker, was bagging their work, throwing it on the line to be sealed at Claudia's machine. I was nearby bagging ribs from the pan by myself, and Linda kept calling me over to translate what they were trying to say to each other in their choppy pantomimed English. Cristina had just joked with Rosa that she needed to marry her so she could get her residency, since Rosa was a legal permanent resident. Linda calls me over and says "Tell Cristina she needs to get married to me so that she can be able to stay here." I tell Cristina, and she made a funny, perplexed face.

Linda says "Wait, what about her husband? Her husband needs to marry someone too so he can stay here too!" I went along with their plot, but cautioned "Actually, it's not going to work because even if she married you in one of the states that allowed same-sex marriage she still can't get her papers that way." Linda didn't understand "But you can in some states get married. I know because my niece got married to a woman. Where was it?" I said "Massachusetts has it, Hawaii…" Linda offers "Maybe Philadelphia?" We all cracked up and Cristina laughed too, scandalized at the suggestion of same-sex marriage. Linda continues "We got to get someone to marry her husband." Cristina exclaims "*Un hombre*!" Linda gasps, and walks back her marriage proposal, saying "No, we got to get him a woman and we got to get Cristina a man to marry. Tell her I was kidding about that whole thing, about her marrying me or whatever." Linda must have thought Cristina had been offended, but when I translate this to Cristina she protests "Oh no, tell her she already told me, she already promised!" Linda laughs heartily at this. Thomas joined us at the table, and Cristina tells me to tell him "I'm going to marry him so I can get papers."

Thomas chuckles "*Mucho dinero*!" I said "Thomas, did you say it's going to cost her a lot?" He said "Yeah, a lot!" Cristina eyes him askance, smirking playfully.

The playful exchange between Linda and Cristina at the rib-trimming table was comically surreal, but not altogether unusual. Although many of the chapters in this dissertation have spotlighted the negative content of symbolic and social boundaries that Latino/a workers draw vis-à-vis their African American counterparts, the modal tendency in their daily interactions with one another is simply to get along and not infrequently to make each other laugh. Moreover, the intense resentments that punctuate Latinos' discursive repertoire about African Americans are largely absent from that of African Americans towards Latinos. Indeed, in this opening encounter, Linda and Cristina do not just have a friendly and funny interaction. Rather, Linda's suggestion that Cristina should marry *her* in order that she "can stay here" conveys poignantly her sympathy for Cristina's situation as an unauthorized migrant and even a desire, however light-heartedly expressed, to assist Cristina in regularizing her status. On numerous occasions throughout my time working in the Loin Boning and Packing department, Linda would affirm that "I don't think it's right for them to get rid of them just 'cause their papers ain't right." And recall from the encounter that opens the introduction to this dissertation Linda's conviction that Cristina *should be able* to get her authorization issues worked out. Referring to Cristina by her real name, Elvia, Linda had said "Elvia here needs to start being real. Elvia needs to start being Elvia. So how much would it cost for her to get her papers?" Linda and other African American workers expressed views about Latinos that were rarely unambiguously exclusionary, as the scholarship built around competition theories would predict, and more typically ranged between ambivalent and sympathetic.

If “competition” is the lynchpin of theories that explain intergroup relations in the social and economic realms (Waldinger 2001; Hamermesh and Bean 1998), a key concept used to explain intergroup relations in the political realm, especially within and between subordinate groups, is “linked fate” (Telles, Sawyer, and Rivera-Salgado 2011; Sanchez 2008; Kaufmann 2003). Scholars interested in the question of minority political coalitions understand that there are opposing perspectives on the likelihood of such political unions, which in the long run are contingent upon the nature of mass attitudes and behaviors (Kaufmann 2003). On the one hand, competition perspectives emphasize that minority groups may come into conflict if they compete for economic resources. On the other hand, other perspectives focus on the overlapping objective group interests among subordinate minorities with respect to policy preferences. The concept of “linked fate” refers to the extent to which members of a group feel their individual fortunes to be tied to the plight of the group as a whole. Scholars posit that a high level of linked fate among members of a subordinate group is likely to produce solidarity with members of other subordinate groups (Sánchez 2008). In turn, “linked fate” is derived from the assumption of homogeneity among members of a group, making felt commonality among group members a prerequisite to a sense of linked fate (Sánchez 2008; Dawson 1996). Critically, this concept was developed with reference to African Americans in order to explain their high levels of solidarity on policy issues, despite growing differentiation by class (Dawson 1994).

In this chapter, I demonstrate the significance of this concept which, coupled with the expanded idea of “racial alienation” that I delineated in Chapter 4, help to explain African American workers’ views of Latinos/migrants. Although Bobo and Hutchins’ (1996) original formulation unnecessarily limits the analytic utility of “racial alienation” by presuming that African Americans are the most racially subordinated group, I relax this assumption, and instead

consider how particular contexts like the workplace condition the sense of racial alienation. This allows for an understanding that within the context of Swine's, Latinos – not African Americans – are the group whose members feel most aggrieved and therefore most racially alienated. The concepts of linked fate and racial alienation together serve as useful heuristics to explain the softer and less negative boundary-making action of African American workers towards Latinos.

My objectives in this chapter are threefold. In the first section, I give the reader a more robust impression of the boundaries that African Americans articulate vis-à-vis Latinos working at Swine's, since much of the focus so far in the dissertation has been on the reverse. In the second section, I anticipate potential challenges to my findings about African American boundary-making vis-à-vis Latinos, considering evidence that gives some support but largely neutralizes such challenges. I discuss several interactions with African American workers that at first glance appear to support an argument for their exclusionary treatment of Latino migrants, but upon further analysis – and in the context of the full range of boundaries that African Americans do or do not articulate vis-à-vis Latinos – bolster my findings. In the third section, I seek to explain why, despite the expectations of competition theories and in contrast to my findings regarding the symbolic and social boundaries drawn by Latinos, African American workers at Swine's do not draw very strong or very negative boundaries vis-à-vis their Latina/o counterparts. I consider whether the relatively weaker and less negative boundary-drawing action on the part of African Americans vis-à-vis Latina/o workers might be indicative of something more than African Americans' generosity of spirit. Alongside other explanations, it might suggest that Latinas' perceptions about the place blacks occupy relative to Latinos in the workplace are at least tacitly understood as such by African Americans themselves. This condition would imply that within the context of Swine's Latinos experience the highest degree

of racial alienation, and therefore the greatest susceptibility to feelings of competition or, as I have argued, other sources of deprivation that are likely to motivate conflict. I suggest that, in combination with a highly developed sense of linked fate among African American workers, which scholars would hypothesize to extend to other subordinate groups, these factors explain my findings regarding intergroup relations.

"Me, personally, I don't give a shit. They come here to work:" Challenging the Presumption of Competitive Threat

On a Monday in mid-September, I was doing "Louisiana" with Vincent at a table at the ribs station. Vincent trimmed the ribs, which were weighed, sorted, and dumped into a giant pan by Alma and Alexis, and I packed eighteen 2.45-3.05 lb ribs to a box. I then lifted each 50 pound box and moved it to the line, where it would be stacked by workers for shipping to its destination. These ribs were a long-standing order with Louisiana Barbecue, a restaurant chain specializing in ribs, and most days several workers were assigned to trim and pack "Louisiana" ribs. Vincent, an African American in his late twenties, was a talker. He could talk indefinitely and could cover a wide range of topics, from personal experience ("My girlfriend getting on my nerves!") to sociopolitical issues ("What is the difference between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans?"), though he just as often was engaging in inappropriate sexual banter (What you wearing under there, boy shorts?").

On this day, our conversation as we worked began with a personal turn, as he recounted his drug bust and the two years he spent in jail, and I somehow ended up telling him about my alcoholic father. At some point, our conversation turned to Cristina. Ever since Cristina was arrested by police at the factory about a month before, Vincent would ask me about her from time to time. The Thursday before, he'd asked me for the second or third time whether Cristina

was “going to get exported.” No, I had told him. “*Como manzana*!” [Like an apple!] Cristina had exclaimed with a chuckle when I told her later what Vincent had asked me about her, confusing “exported” with “deported.” And he brought her up again on Monday, asking me “You talk to Cristina? How’s she doing? Is she alright? Is she working?” I was unsure of his motives for asking so I answered evasively “She’s doing a little cooking, a little caring for kids. Why?” “Just wondering how she’s doing. What about her husband?” I told him I didn’t think her husband had much work these days. In fact, her husband Ernesto seemed to be going through a long spell of unemployment and underemployment, unable to secure work as easily without papers as before, perhaps feeling disillusioned, and drinking heavily. “Can she come back to work if her papers get straight?” Vincent asked. “I guess, yeah, probably,” I answered, not sure how her having been arrested at work for identity theft – and fired summarily – would affect her eligibility to regularize her status, were a legalization program finally come to pass. I remembered Cristina telling me how many workers at Swine’s who had been working under assumed identities when Hondurans were granted TPS in 1998 and again in 2001 had the names on their hard hats change from one day to the next. “Well what did she get arrested for?” Vincent asked. “Identity theft,” I said plainly, not wanting to talk about Cristina’s business but realizing that most people knew what her arrest was for, so it wasn’t a secret at the plant. “So her papers ain’t straight?” “That’s the issue here…” I said, trailing off, wondering why Vincent was acting like this was news to him, or whether he really hadn’t known for sure.

“Me personally, I don’t give a shit. I mean, they [immigrants] come here to work and whatever. What bothers me is when they come here and they work but then they send all their money home.” That got us talking about why “they” do that. “Well, you know, in a way it’s because a lot of people, they don’t feel like they really belong here,” I offered, trying to explain

migrants' dual orientations and their attachments to family in origin countries. "Well I don't agree with that," he snapped. I tried not to be preachy, but inevitably I was. "Well they have good reason to. A, you have all these hate groups and all these regular people telling them 'we don't want you, go home.' B, you don't have citizenship, and you don't have the same rights and status as citizens do. And you have little hope of gaining that. C, all your family is over there. "Well I can understand that. But I don't agree that they should feel like outsiders," Vincent maintains. Then Vincent made a poignant comparison to his own situation, a situation shared by a growing proportion of working class and poor black men, whose citizenship is increasingly proscribed. "Just because I got picked up on a drug charge, I got busted for selling dope once and I don't get to vote. I don't have the right to vote." I said "Well I disagree with that too. I think felon disenfranchisement is another way of screwing black people."

Vincent expressed the kind of ambivalent sympathy towards Latino/a migrants that other African American workers articulated, even when directly asked their views about crackdowns on undocumented migrants. Sitting in my kitchen one evening, I asked Vincent what he thought about immigration enforcement policies such as the 287(g) program which many North Carolina counties participate in, and which make apprehension and deportation of unauthorized migrants far easier than ever because police office can inquire about immigration status when a person is stopped on suspicion of any sort of law-breaking. Again, he drew parallels to his own encounters on the wrong side of the law, displaying a confused ambivalence about illegality as an embodied status produced by law.

> So you mean, deporting is legal or illegal? That's about like me defending selling dope. You know what I'm saying? If it's illegal, what can you do about it? If you're doing something illegal and you get caught, you get caught. So, I mean, that's similar to me. If I'm doing something illegal and I get caught, I get caught. I can't complain about you trying to increase something to catch something that's not right. That's how I see it. If it's not right, it's not right. But just 'cause they said it's not right, don't mean it's right. But if

> they [authorities] doing it to enforce the law instead of trying to make it stricter on the law, I mean, they do that every day. It's not just immigration or illegals. They do that on everything every day. So, I mean, that'd be hard for me to try to explain. I wouldn't understand that. I wouldn't understand how to explain something like that because if it's illegal, it's illegal.

Vincent's ambivalence with regards to the illegality of immigrants vacillates between adherence and resistance to the constructive force of law as both coercion and ideology (Haney Lopez 2006). His repeated comparisons to his own proscribed citizenship as a felon suggest an *empathic* basis for his wavering. I prodded Vincent to elaborate, wanting to better understand his views on unauthorized migrants.

> But I mean, I can understand. Now, if...like...how they say about Honduras. Honduras is poor. Obviously. I mean, very poor. I can understand if that would be a draw. They'd be able to...I imagine that'd make a person feel real good to be able to work, take care of themselves, and their family, their whole family. I mean, it makes me feel good every day to be able to take care of my family. And that's my immediate family in my house, and my other two kids that's outside my home. I mean, it makes me feel very good to do that. But for you to be able to...that's the little difference I make because my money doesn't go as far, but it covers enough. But for a person to come here and work and support a whole family back there, that got to make them feel good. But I mean, just, I understand that, but I don't understand. You know what I'm saying? I mean, if you're legalized, you're legalized. If you're not, you're not.

Ultimately, Vincent concedes to an inherent human drive to survive, and therefore, to migrate in spite of any obstacles in order to support their family.

> A person got to eat no matter what. I mean, you're gonna survive. That's human nature. Just wanting to survive. I mean, it ain't like, that's not like...I mean like you said, of course I would try to go to Canada [if the economic situation in the U.S. were dire] 'cause I don't want my family living like this, but and I mean, you do whatever means you have to. I mean, you'll try to do it the right way, but if it don't work the right way, you'll do it whatever way you can do it.

In fact, Vincent's qualms with "Hispanics" were a far cry from the "immigrants take jobs that belong to us" line that competition perspectives would expect. Aside from a fixation on the idea that the problem with immigrants is that they remit all their earnings, Vincent's other gripes were superficial and even comical. "Why do they throw their dirty toilet paper on the floor?"

Vincent asked me with disgusted wonder. Or, "Why do Hispanic guys touch each other's asses all the time?" I ask Vincent what he thinks Americans' views of Latinos are, especially immigrants.[64]

> I mean, to me, everything's alright. I've always been a person - I'll be friends with anybody. I can speak with anybody. I can do whatever with anybody. I can hang out with anybody. That's how I've always been, but it's like...once I...you can get bad vibes off any race or any person. It's not really...I can't say it's really a race or whatever. I mean, you know...It's some stuff that you see at work that shouldn't happen. Like in the bathrooms. That's ridiculous to me. The tissue in the bathroom! That's just fucking ridiculous, man. And I mean, I don't understand. I try to understand that shit, but I don't really understand it. It's like, I asked one of my homeboys. He's actually married to a Mexican chick. She's actually from Mexico...married. Well, he was married to her and I was like, "Man, why in the hell they do this shit?" [throw dirty toilet paper on the floor]. We're having a conversation. I was like, "Man, why in the hell they do this shit?" He was like, "Man, I think the plumbing's just bad in Mexico so they don't really do that, actually." That's the way he put it. I mean, why the hell they don't put trashcans in the bathroom, so you can put it in the trashcan? Or let 'em know there's...they can...it will flush. But then, I don't know. I see a lot of them as hard workers, but then...like everybody else, you got lazy asses in every bunch. You got ones that's gonna be good in every bunch, and you have some that's bad in every bunch. I mean, but a lot of the Hispanic males, most of them are alcoholics. That's a stereotype. They have DWIs and all that shit. I mean, you do get that, but every race has stereotypes. So, you can't take it as a bad. That shit happens in every race, but…

Quite unlike Latina/o workers' views of African Americans, Vincent generalizes that Latinos are for the most part "hard workers," but this does not seem to suggest that other groups are not. After all, he says "you got lazy asses in every bunch." And his use of the term "stereotype" in qualifying his other views of Latinos – that they are alcoholics – and his concession that "every

[64] If Vincent's preoccupation with what he termed "the tissue issue" suggests a view of Latinos as dirty and unhygienic, in other respects black workers articulated a view of Latinos that suggested quite the opposite, but just as comically. One evening, I picked up take-out Chinese food with Jaycene, an African American worker in her thirties whom I knew from the Marination department. As we left the restaurant, we walked past a Laundromat located next door. Jaycene remarks that it "smells like Mexicans." I laughed, and asked what she meant. She explained that "Spanish people" always smell strongly of clean laundry.

race has stereotypes" suggests a much subtler mode of boundary-making than that which prevailed among Latinos.

An older African American worker, Thomas's perspective on African American-Latino relations at work was distinctly pragmatic. At work, he tended towards a quiet laboriousness. He could be conversational, if someone else started it. Thomas was generally easygoing and solicitous, rarely engaging in the sort of cranky skirmishes or playful banter that most workers succumbed to in order to pass the time or when time took its toll on their spirit. His views on African American and Latino/a relations at work reflected these more general dispositions.

Over beers one weekend afternoon at Wing World, I asked Thomas about how African Americans and Latinos get along at work. "As far as in my department, there are more Hispanics in my department than there are blacks. But, as I said, once people are trained, everybody knows their job, what they're supposed to do, what it's gonna take for us to get the job done. Everybody wants to go home. We work together, pull together for the common cause, and go home. On the boning lines, on the loin lines, you got blacks and Hispanics working side by side. You have to trust the next man to you because they're knife is…you got to have a certain amount of trust and camaraderie to get the job done without injury." In fact, Thomas's comments indicate a sense of solidarity and shared purpose among workers, Latino or African American. Working together cooperatively "to get the job done" and to get it "done without injury" demands trust and camaraderie, a view that is consistent with having a sense of linked fate among workers of different ethnoracial groups.

But African American workers were not entirely ambivalent about their perceptions of Latinos as coworkers. In fact, African Americans working in the predominantly Latino Loin Boning and Packing department experienced a number of difficulties trying to get along in the

workplace. Some African Americans felt that Latino/a workers shunned them, teased them, or otherwise sabotaged their work effort, an issue other scholars have documented in the retail, hotel and restaurant, and light manufacturing industries (Waldinger 1997). Vincent discusses his experience working among mostly Latinos on the boning line when he was first hired. He describes a pattern of marginalization and non-cooperation on the part of the mostly Latino boning line workers.

> When I first started, I started straight on the knife. Actually, I was on the line, cutting the little bone out. I didn't really understand it, and then you know, it's mostly Hispanics in front of that line. I mean, busting on the line period, it's Hispanics, and a lot of the guys, they don't really want to help you. If you're not Hispanic, they don't want to help you. I mean, I feel that way. That's how I feel. That's what a couple of other people said. They'd rather send a Hispanic guy over there rather than send somebody else over there. When I first got there, I met a couple people there, see they alright, but when I first got there, they wouldn't help me at all. I'm talking about at all, and then they'd run to the bathroom, stick me on line. First thing! Stuck me on line with the knife, trying to cut this mess. He gone to the bathroom, one of the other ones gone to the bathroom, I'm stuck there. I don't know how to do this mess. Know what I'm saying? Billy [crew leader] kept standing back and watch, but they kept leaving. So, I'm trying to help out, but I got frustrated with it. And then so I think I told Billy, I was like, "Man, I can't do that mess, man." I was like, "Right now, I can't do it. They're not trying to teach me for anything." Actually, I ended up cussing one of the dudes out. They act like...I asked him, "How you do this? How you do that?" He would never speak to me. He'd say something in Spanish, that was it. I don't remember his name, but he's right there. So, I think he didn't speak English, so I messed around, he would never help me. I asked him, he'd act like I ain't say shit. So I ended up getting frustrated 'cause he kept looking at me, shoving the meat back to me, and I'm like, "Man, fuck that. It's your shit. You won't help me? What I'm supposed to do? Either you're gonna show me, or stop getting a…" I mean, I'm not say it and keep getting madder and trying to do something that I can't do, but you know how to do it, but you not trying to show me how to do it. So I told Billy, I was like, "Man, I can't do this, man." 'Cause I ended up meeting the dude. I mean, I cussed the dude out! And he act like he didn't understand. Like, "Whatever." So, I didn't think he understand either. They started to put me on the other line, on the ham line. I did that for a while. I actually got something I can do. It started making me feel better about myself, more confident about myself 'cause the other job, I couldn't get it. But now, I could go up there. I think I can do it now 'cause I know how to knife and all that, so it's no problem now. But before, I struggled, and then with no help, that was too frustrating.

Even after working at Swine's for a year, Vincent dealt with taunts from Latino coworkers.[65] One day, I was bagging ribs by myself when Vincent asked me to come help him open up rework in the back. Rework consisted of product that had to be re-bagged and re-run through the Tortuga because it had not been properly sealed. "That bitch is slow!" he said about Bo, the rotund African American worker who opened up "leakers" behind the Tortuga. "I mean there's a lot of work back there, but he's slow." I was helping him open up rework when Eros, a Honduran packer began to rush us and joke about our work effort. Eros kept twirling his finger "go go go," and telling us to hurry up. Vincent says to me "You know I ain't racist right?" "Ok, why do you say that?" I asked. "This guy really gets on my nerves." "OK, and?" I prodded. "Well, I think some really racist shit." I kind of laughed, asking "like what?" "I don't know," Vincent responds, trailing off, never telling me what "racist shit" he conjured up when Eros pressured him. Right then, Eros does the *huevón* [lazy ass] gesture with his hand about Vincent. "He knows I'm mad, and then he goes and says shit." Eros is just laughing, enjoying this provocation. Crucially, Vincent was fully aware of the racialized nature of the resentment that Eros' taunts caused him to feel, but in the end he does not articulate these, to me or to Eros.

Susie, an older African American worker who had recently transferred into the Loin Boning and Packing department from Hamboning, had a similar experience working on the butt boning line. Susie was bagging loins with me one evening after her work on the butt boning line was finished when she recounted a pattern of harassment from one of her Latino coworkers. Every time she went to the bathroom and left her plastic arm guard behind until she returned, one or more of her Latino coworkers would fill it with fat. Worse, Susie was hurt that Eugenio would

[65] Vincent taunted Latino workers as well from time to time. But importantly, his taunts were not characterized by criticisms of Latinos' work effort as a group, nor were they expressed through ethnoracial language or slurs. Instead, Vincent usually employed homophobic taunts, bantering with Latinos by calling them "jotos" [faggots].

tell her “Black women no good. Hispanic women good.” He would tell her to watch Latinas work so she would learn how to do the work properly. This sort of marginalization of blacks and their targeting for pranks has also been documented in Latino-dominated workplaces in the furniture manufacturing, restaurant, and hotel industries in Los Angeles (Waldinger 1997). In the hotel industry studied by Waldinger (1997), such pranks were common and employers referred to them as a way of explaining why black workers would not make it in these jobs. As one hotel manager reported (Waldinger 1997: 382):

> “Housekeeping is all Hispanic: you try to put a black in there, they won't last. They intimidate. We have had situations where we have different cultures that get put together and we lose the person. The Hispanic houseman will play pranks and not deliver linens to the black housekeeper and then they don't get
> the beds made."

AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKERS’ ‘REAL’ VIEWS ABOUT LATINOS: WAS I MISSING SOMETHING?

But perhaps black workers were really good at hiding their true feelings from me since I was not African American. Maybe African Americans did indeed draw boundaries vis-à-vis their Latino/a coworkers that were just as salient and as negative as those drawn by Latinos against them, but I was just somehow not privy to these. This possibility occurred to me throughout my fieldwork, but especially surfaced in the wake of Cristina’s arrest for identity theft.

Several days after Cristina’s arrest, I coordinated a collection box to help defray Cristina’s impending court costs. As workers streamed back into work after lunch, I stood by the doorway leading from the cafeteria to the production floor with a collection box. Workers passing by chipped in a dollar or two, sometimes asking what the collection was for. Patricia, an African American worker in her thirties stopped and asked me what I was collecting money for. I explained it was to help Cristina with her bond and court costs following her arrest. “I can’t believe y’all!” she exclaimed. “After all the time she worked here!” Her remarks were

ambiguous, but clear in insinuating that collecting money for Cristina was not a legitimate cause. Perhaps Patricia thought that Cristina should have enough money herself and we shouldn't be collecting for her, or maybe she felt that Cristina didn't deserve it considering she had "made out" with all this money while working at Swine's with an assumed identity. Still, although Patricia did not donate to the collection box for Cristina, other black workers did, including Bess and Thomas.

Other African American workers also expressed a certain ambivalence around the legitimacy of Cristina's arrest. One afternoon, I was bagging loin ends when Bess, an older African American worker, called me over to the boning line where she worked on the whizzard knife. She asked me about Cristina. I explained what had happened and Bess was responding sympathetically when all of a sudden she says: "How could she do that? She knew that was going to catch up with her!" But after this moment of judgment, Bess reiterated her sympathies: "She got kids though, right? She got a family." I told Bess it was especially unfortunate for Cristina because upon being arrested and summarily fired by Swine's she lost all her earned time off which could have been cashed out, as well as her attendance bonus. "Oh they [the company] don't care, they don't care. Oh they don't care about anybody," she said. Critically though, Bess expressed some sympathy for Cristina's situation, despite the fact that in general Bess felt that Latino/a workers looked down on blacks and talked about them in negative terms, as she had confided to Ileana in the encounter I retell in Chapter Three. Her remark that management "don't care about anybody" seems to convey a sense of shared experience among *all workers*, much as Thomas's comments about the necessity for cooperation and trust among Latino/a and African American workers above suggests.

At other times though, the vulnerabilities of migrant illegality were a source of humor for African American workers. Soon after Cristina's arrest for identity theft, Vincent and Adrienne made light of her circumstance, and that of other unauthorized workers who inhabit the surreal world of assumed identities. I was bagging ribs with Adrienne, a young African American worker, when Vincent expressed a desire to look me up on Facebook. I said "You're not going to find me on Facebook because this isn't my name" [Janet, my first name, which was the name on my hard hat]. Realizing my remark was confusing, I clarified: "No, it's my name it's just not what people call me." Vincent and Adrienne proceed to whisper to each other. "What are y'all saying, what's so funny?" I asked. "When the immigration bust happens, everybody's going to know her [your] real name." They were chuckling over this, but at the same time exclaiming "That's so wrong, that's really messed up, it's not funny." Adrienne adds "That's why she had left that day with Cristina" [when I left work after Cristina was arrested to go bail her out]. They were chuckling again, but saying "that's not funny." Although Vincent and Adrienne were making light of Cristina's arrest, Cristina herself had frequently made light of the "artistic" name on her hard hat, as workers who labored under assumed identities referred to these, often to the amusement of black coworkers. And crucially, their whispers and self-reproaches suggested a much softer, more self-conscious boundary-making on the part of African Americans vis-à-vis their Latino counterparts.

Indeed, the muted tone of African American workers' suggestive comments contrasts sharply with the brazenly racialized denunciations of Latino/a workers. These brazenly racialized denunciations were expressed on a regular basis by many Latina/o workers, and sometimes were expressed directly to African American workers, like Cristina's remark to Michael about coming to work painted black so she didn't have to work. I asked Thomas and Vincent directly whether I

had missed something because African Americans did not identify me as black, but rather as white or Latina. Perhaps this had inhibited their commentary to me or within earshot of me. As usual, Thomas responded matter-of-factly, understanding that my question was about whether "because you're one of *them*" black workers had felt inhibited.

> "I don't pretend to speak for everyone, but I don't have any problem working with Hispanics or any other ethnic group. I've always been about, you do your job, I'm gonna do my job, we'll get along fine. It's all about getting the job done. The sooner I can get out of there, the better. I really don't have any problem with Hispanics or other groups working, as long as they do their job. Now, you've got Hispanics, blacks, and Haitians now who are out there just for the paycheck. You gotta work together."

Once again, Thomas emphasizes the need for African Americans and Latinos to "work together." I asked Thomas to offer a counter-example to getting along with Latinos. Understandably, he pinpoints the language barrier as a potential obstacle to cooperative relations between native-born and foreign born workers. "The Hispanics speak Spanish. Most native people, people born in this part of the country, don't speak Spanish. It's increasing now, but at that time most black people didn't speak Spanish. Most Caucasian people didn't speak Spanish. And Hispanic people didn't speak English. So there was a communication gap. Being able to relay something to a co-worker who might happen to be Hispanic *or Haitian*."

Vincent was even more blunt in his response, boosting my confidence that the patterns I documented were not the result of a concerted, coordinated, and sustained effort on the part of African American workers to censor themselves around people who might understand what they were saying, like me. Ultimately, Vincent returns to his main hang-up with Latinos: "the tissue issue."

Vanesa: What about at work? What's the...I guess, I always try to keep my ears open and try to listen out for any kinds of commentary, but I don't know if because I'm not Black, other Black people wouldn't necessarily share their...and because eventually most people knew that I was Puerto Rican, even though I look White, and suppose…
Vincent: Shit, I tell you!

Vanesa: Yeah, well, maybe people wouldn't...didn't feel comfortable telling me...talking shit about Latinos to me, but maybe they do. And so I'm asking you, what do people say? 'Cause I'm not exactly clear.
Vincent: It's basically the tissue issue. And then, I mean, I get a vacation...one week vacation. If I was Hispanic from somewhere else and I decided I wanted to go home or say I was going home, I can get a month off, unpaid. Me, personally, I can't get a month off and say I'm going home. So, I mean, it's certain things I see is not fair, but then it just could be something that they are taking advantage of and I just don't know how to take advantage of it yet. Something that I might've overlooked, not being able to take advantage of it.

When African American workers lashed out at Latino/a workers in ways that could be interpreted as taking on ethnoracial dimensions, this tended to be in the context of having perceived a personal slight, not *systematic* deprivation in the configuration of workplace relations. And even Vincent's response to Eros' taunts demonstrates a substantial level of restraint, much as Jeremy showed in his response to Cristina's proclamation about coming to work painted black so that she didn't have to work. For example, after a tornado destroyed his home, Vincent accused Latinos specifically of not contributing to the collection box taken up for him. And Linda lashed out at Salvadoran worker Sara after the two got into a quarrel when bagging ribs together one day. Sara was bagging ribs that Linda handed to her, some of which were meant to be packed in black bags and others in clear bags. Sara was not paying much attention to the distinction between ribs that had to be packed in one kind of bag or another, much to Linda's chagrin. When Sara held open the wrong bag, Linda passed her the right bag, annoyed that Sara was being indifferent. Sara snatched the bag from Linda and threw it back at her. It was at that point that Linda told Sara "it was good that Obama wasn't going to give them papers," while also prompting Linda to hold her fist up menacingly.

Such denunciations, however, were rare and the ethnoracial identification of "Hispanics" in everyday complaints and grievances was remarkable for its absence. In this sense, the conclusion that black workers' attitudes and behavior towards Latinos is sharply exclusionary

(Marrow 2011) would seem to draw on weak evidence, particularly in light of the fact that Latinos – not African Americans – are engaged in the boldest and most frequent boundary-drawing efforts. On the other hand, it is plausible that Latinos would single out African Americans as the most exclusionary towards them for several reasons. First, as a reflection of Latinos' own negative views of African Americans as *blacks*, a status also devalued in their communities of origin, as I have argued in Chapter Three. Second, given the relative scarcity of whites at the workplace, African Americans are for the most part the only other group Latinos interact with. And given the perception that African Americans occupy a position of privilege in the workplace relative to their own, conditions are ripe for Latinos to demarcate stronger boundaries against African Americans than the boundaries drawn by African Americans toward them.

But still. Maybe if I had worked in a majority African American department, I would have seen the inverse of the patterned dynamics I observed in Loin Boning. Maybe I would have observed African Americans drawing sharply negative symbolic boundaries vis-à-vis their Latina/o co-workers. This could have been the case if, by simply being the majority, African Americans found themselves in the position of being the most oppressively exploited – if only because as a majority they would be depended on to carry the bulk of the production process. Or, if the whole business of boundary-drawing was just a question of volume – where the composition were reversed, the volume on Latinos' boundary-making would be muted while that of African Americans would be amplified. Fortunately, I am able to consider the size of groups as a factor that may affect intergroup relations, as other researchers have argued (Olzak 1992; Marrow 2011).[66] Recall that in the first seven months of my sixteen month-long employment at

[66] Although Marrow (2011) takes into account the relative size of groups in the two North Carolina counties that she studies, recall from Chapter 4 that her findings – stronger exclusionary boundary-making action attributed to African

Swine's, I worked in the Marination department, a small (~25), majority African American (80 percent) department. I do not find this to be the case.[67] Instead, I found the same overall pattern of intergroup dynamics, but Latinos' boundary-making action was less frequently and less intensely expressed. The following encounter illustrates this finding.

One January evening, four months into my job in Marination, we were seasoning pork loin filets that we had stuffed with wild rice. I was tossing filets into a tub filled with garlic and herb seasoning alongside Carmen, an older Mexican worker, Lydia, an older South American worker, and Ms. Angie, an older African American worker. Tanesha and Kim[68], both young African American workers, and Valerie, of mixed African American and Mexican descent, were also seasoning meat at a different table. Lydia has just been over there briefly when Tanesha called me over and asked "How do you say "black slut" in Spanish?" She and Kim offered something like "verde negra puta" and I corrected them, saying not "green black slut," just

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Americans towards Latinos in the majority black county with only a small Latino minority – runs counter to the typical hypotheses derived from competition models (Olzak 1992). In such formulations, it is the size and growth rate of the incoming group (in this case, Latinos) rather than the incumbent group (in this case, blacks) which would be the crucial variable accounting for competitive threat.

[67] A different challenge that readers might raise regarding my findings is worthy of some consideration here. If competition theories would expect intergroup prejudice and conflict to arise from an incumbent group's direct competition over resources, like jobs, then perhaps African Americans *not already employed* at Swine's would articulate very different views about Latinos and migrants than those I report here. This is certainly a possibility, but whether this is the case does not alter the validity of my argument about *intergroup* relations, since Latinos' primary means of engaging with African Americans is *in the workplace*. Moreover, African American new hires, who might then be expected to articulate a stronger and more negative discursive repertoire vis-à-vis their Latino/a counterparts, did not appear to do so. Recall from Chapter 4 that Aisha, the young African American new hire, was taunted incessantly by Latino coworkers in *ethnoracial terms*, but this was not paralleled in her actions towards them. In fact, Aisha appeared to enjoy flirting with Latinos, and remarked about the numerous handsome Latinos working at Swine's. Recall as well that Adrienne, to whom Cristina had told she was going to come to work painted black so she didn't have to work, reacted with remarkable restraint. Finally, and more importantly, getting a job is not the only aspect of economic competition to be considered. Status within the social organization of labor is certainly a potential resource groups may be in competition over. My findings about African Americans' weak and more ambivalent boundary-making action could be interpreted to suggest that they perceive a low level of competition for status in the workplace. This, in turn, bolsters my argument that the crucial factor motivating Latino-African American relations at Swine's is Latinos' perception that they are the most oppressively exploited workers and that African Americans occupy a privileged position – a motivating grievance quite distinct from that which competition models have typically proposed.

[68] Kim is Vincent's cousin.

“negra puta.” Chuckling, she asked “How do you say “ugly black slut”?” I asked who they were trying to call an ugly black slut, joking as I walked away that I knew who. “We’re just trying to learn Spanish,” one of them replied cleverly. They called me over and asked “How do you say ‘bad breath’?” Feeling suddenly self-conscious about the foggy air leaving my mouth, I responded that “breath” is “aliento” and before I could continue Tanesha jumped in “‘Aliento?’ Well tell Lydia she got some “aliento,” laughing mischievously. Kim walked over sneakily to Lydia and repeated the word, giggling. “Aliento!” “That’s mean,” I said to Tanesha, watching as Lydia furrowed her brows at “La Princesa,” as she called Kim, an ironic nickname that referred to Kim’s perceived low level of work effort and demands at having her way.

A while later, when we had finished seasoning meat at one table, Lydia and I move to help finish seasoning the tubs of meat on the rack where Tanesha and Kim were working. As Lydia tried to put a heavy tub filled with filets on the small table where Tanesha was working, Tanesha resisted, blocking her path. Lydia insisted, muttering “negra cabrona” [black bitch] clearly loud enough for Tanesha to hear. A short while later, Tanesha turned to me and said “Lydia be talking junk.” Lydia, perhaps stinging over the breath comment, was standing at our original work area looking bitter. Throughout the night, as I walked over to ask why she was sour, she would simply snap ‘Esta negra puta me tiene harta!’ [I’m sick and tired of this black slut!]. Tanesha too seemed pretty serious the rest of the night, leaving me to wonder if she was upset about her interactions with Lydia. Lydia was cranky that night, but Tanesha was getting on other workers’ bad sides that night too by talking junk. In the locker room after work, Ms. Angie was furious because Tanesha had called her out in public. “Hey Ms. Angie, aren’t you gonna wash your hands” after she had used the bathroom and laughed at her. “I don’t come looking to get dick in my ass every time I come to work!” Ms. Angie had exploded. As we walked out

together, Tanesha made another comment, prompting Ms. Angie to tell me "I don't mind jokes but don't get a laugh at my expense, I don't like that!" I suggested she say something to Tanesha. "I might," Ms. Angie responded dead serious.

Over the course of my seven months in Marination, Lydia alternated between outbursts aimed at "that negra" that were usually triggered by an incident on the line (e.g. Tanesha's insistence on stuffing pockets with meat even when the steel grate that made Lydia's "wipedown" job easier could not be found) and declarations about Tanesha's essential goodness ('How can I complain? The girl has been very good with me.'). In fact typically their relationship was playful. A month after the incident I recounted above, I walked up and Tanesha was bantering with Lydia about her husband and son. "Do your husband like dark chocolate?" she asked amid muffled laughter. Lydia responded that her son likes "chocha negra" [black pussy] (he is married to a black Puerto Rican woman, whom Lydia dislikes).

Such crude humor was a common communication device between Latina/o and African American workers, who otherwise generally lacked a shared language through which to engage one another. Sex and laughter, it seems, have a more universal appeal. Indeed, folklorists, anthropologists, and cultural sociologists have studied the role of humor and jokes, as well as sexuality, as crucial mediums through which intergroup relationships are channeled (Vucetic 2004; Nagel 2003; Dundes 1987; Lowe 1986).[69] Almost like a sort of call-and-response mantra, an African American worker would ask a Latina coworker, or vice versa, "You like mucho chaca-chaca?" to which she would respond "Every day!" Over time, Tanesha took to calling

[69] Of the four "humor mechanisms" that Neuendorf (2010) identifies (superiority/disparagement, incongruity, arousal, and social currency), the crude sexual humor that was prevalent in exchanges between Latina/os and African Americans is best thought of as a combination of arousal and social currency mechanisms. That is, such crude humor serves to relieve psychological tension through sexual humor (arousal) while building relationships through playful interaction (social currency). Nicholas DeGenova (2005) refers to the comically surreal aspects of Latinos' workplace humor as *relajo*. Throughout this dissertation, the element of humor – perhaps especially in the form of disparagement – has been a persistent theme.

Lydia her “momma” and they developed a relationship of some affection and trust - lending each other small amounts of money and making sure each got back to the floor on time from breaks. In addition, Tanesha took to switching from time to time with Lydia, doing her “wipedown” job when Lydia could no longer stand to or when Tanesha’s hands were too cold to stuff pockets.

But Tanesha’s sensitivity to being talked about in Spanish reminded me of an incident with Jaycene, a black coworker in her thirties from New York whom I had become close to early on. The mistrust African American workers felt about Latinos speaking Spanish around them, which other scholars have documented as well (Waldinger 1997), was made abundantly clear one night when Jay put me on notice, texting me that “I consider you as a friend, but when you are with your Spanish people I feel something is being said about me. Please don’t do it again.” Earlier that night, as we were changing out of our work clothes in the locker room, Lydia had pointed towards Jay and said that she looked like a beauty queen from her country. I had translated this to Jay, and she had responded simply “Oh OK.” Although in this particular instance, Lydia was not bashing blacks, she occasionally spoke negatively about blacks in general and had a proclivity for joking about black coworkers to their face, leaving them sensing that she was talking about them.

In sum, whether in the majority Latino Loin Boning department or the majority African American Marination department, I did not observe African Americans drawing especially strong or negative boundaries vis-à-vis their Latino counterparts. Nor did African Americans articulate these when asked in interviews about their experiences working with Latinos at Swine’s or when I socialized with them in informal contexts outside of work. Instead, the thrust of African Americans’ discursive repertoire relating to Latinos/ migrants would more accurately be characterized as ranging between ambivalent and sympathetic. Certainly, the frequency and

kinds of boundaries that African Americans articulate are in stark contrast to those in Latinos' discursive repertoire about them. I argue that African Americans' only weak articulation of grievances in ethnoracial terms, compared to Latinos' strong articulation of grievances in such terms, is strong support for viewing Latinos, not African Americans, as the most racially alienated group at Swine's. In contrast, comments from African American workers like Thomas, Vincent, and Linda suggest an ethos of solidarity among workers and a sympathetic ambivalence about immigration. The data I have laid out in this chapter suggest that the concepts of "racial alienation" and "linked fate" may help to explain my findings, which challenge the expectations of competition theories and the conclusions put forth recently regarding African Americans' exclusionary treatment of Latinos (Marrow 2011). Previous research has been narrowly locked into competition models, and has suffered from methodological limitations like the reliance on interviews with Latinos to gather data on African American attitudes and behavior.

RECONCILING "RACIAL ALIENATION" AND "LINKED FATE" AT SWINE'S

A flaw in Bobo and Hutchins' (1996) elaboration of the "racial alienation" concept, a measure of the degree to which group members feel enfranchised or aggrieved, is its narrow construction and application to the case of African Americans, as I argued in Chapter 4. While nothing in their conceptualization of "racial alienation" precludes it from capturing the experience of groups other than African Americans, in practice the application of the concept suggests a subtle elision between the two. As a result, it becomes difficult to envision that "racial alienation" motivates the attitudes and behaviors of other groups, since – by fiat – African Americans are presumed to be the quintessentially racially alienated group. Focusing instead on the *relational* dependence of intergroup dynamics patterned through the prism of white dominance moves us away from this snare. But how does the concept of linked fate relate to the concept of racial alienation? It would seem that the former is a precondition for the latter. Yet

scholars predict that having a strong sense of linked fate reduces in-group members' prejudice towards out-group members (Sánchez and Masuoka 2010), while scoring positive on racial alienation is predicted to heighten prejudice towards out-groups (Bobo and Hutchins 1996).

In the context of Swine's – *within the social organization of labor* – "racial alienation" is felt most acutely by Latinos, who perceive that their group is the most oppressively exploited and that African Americans are a privileged group. At the same time, in the context of Swine's, as in the broader American society, African Americans appear to possess a heightened sense of linked fate, the result of a historical legacy that has redoubled their feelings of commonality not just with one another but perhaps also with other subordinate groups. Importantly, though, these dynamics manifest themselves in this way on the condition that Latinos are indeed the most aggrieved group at Swine's.

Whether or not less intense boundary-making on the part of African Americans towards their Latino/a counterparts reflects a tacit admission that, as a group, African Americans are relatively more advantaged than Latinos at work is an intriguing possibility. But there is other supportive evidence for this finding, a finding that differs substantially from the expectations and conclusions based on competition and conflict models, of which the group position model is one variant. Survey research on African American attitudes about Latino immigration offer evidence that suggests their views are softer than whites' attitudes towards immigrants, and less negative about Latinos than Latinos' views of them (Mindiola, Niemann, Rodríguez 2002; McClain et al 2006; Yancey 2003; Thornton and Mizuno 1999).

Although survey research has important limitations, including social desirability bias and a reliance on the articulation of attitudes that may differ from actual behavior, surveys that provide adequate samples of African American respondents at least make attributions about

attitudes and rationales based on African Americans' own statements, rather than extrapolating their attitudes and explanations from the depictions and perceptions of Latinos, a fatal methodological flaw with serious substantive implications. For whatever reason, social scientists have been too quick to accept claims about African Americans' attitudes and behaviors as conclusive fact. The theories (e.g. group-based competition) and heuristic models (e.g. sense of group position) that have generally informed research on intergroup relations have contributed to this state of affairs, as have the methodological dependencies (e.g. interviews) that constrain social scientists' research designs and blind them to implicit assumptions and subtle biases in their data.

Whatever collective experience individual Latino/a migrants may have been a part of in their origin communities, their defining collective experience as migrants in the U.S. is the fusion of disparate national and sub-national subjectivities into an aggregate identification – by others most definitely, and increasingly by themselves – as *hispanos*. In contrast, although African Americans are by no means homogenous, they nonetheless share a collective history, memory, and in many ways experience that forged them as a group a long time ago (Eyerman 2004).[70] This is important to recognize and helps to explain my findings in a number of ways. If

[70] Perhaps related to the strong sense of linked fate resulting from the "black utility heuristic" (Dawson 1994), the assumption of homogeneity among African Americans was strong. This took a comical twist one day as I chatted with Vincent as we emptied a combo, throwing the bagged meat on the line.

One afternoon in late October 2010, Vincent was throwing some bagged bellies on the line and I was throwing some ribs on the line next to him, and he asked "so which one are you today the virgin or the other one?" "Probably the virgin." "Why?" "I'm feeling kind of in a funk." "A funk, what's that?" "In a bad mood or whatever." "Is that some white people slang?" "Dude, just because you haven't heard of some slang word doesn't mean it's white people talk. There's lots of places in this country, not just Perry, North Carolina." He says "whatever I'm black and we're all the same." I said "no, that's not true. Black people are not all the same, there's lots of subcultures among black people." He said "no, we're all the same, it's all the same thing." I said "no, I know plenty of black people that belong to lots of different subcultures." Vincent said something about Puma sneakers: "that's getting really popular among Hispanic people, right?" I was like "what do you mean? When I was a teenager, and I was trying to be all alternative in Puerto Rico, that's what I would wear." "That's 'cause you're Hispanic." "No, that's because I was trying to be

African Americans indeed possess a strong sense of linked fate, for Latinos, who constitute a diverse assortment of national and subnational identities, a sense of linked fate is taking shape under very different circumstances.

Beyond Swine's, survey research on Latino linked fate has argued that a "brown utility heuristic," or a sense of commonality among Latinos, is a prerequisite for Latinos to express solidarity with other groups, such as African Americans (Sánchez 2008). And yet, survey research finds this felt commonality among Latinos to vary substantially by national origin. At Swine's, Hondurans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, and other Latinos come together as *hispanos* through their shared subordination – and their shared sense that African Americans occupy a position of privilege relative to their own. The particular circumstances that shape Latino/a panethnicity, and which make possible an emergent sense of linked fate among Latinos at Swine's, therefore casts a dubious shadow on the potential for Latino/a workers to extend solidarity to their African American counterparts but does not appear to inhibit similarly inhibit African American workers' potential for developing a sense of linked fate with Latinos.

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alternative." "I know lots of black people that are part of different subcultures," I said. "Like goth," he asks. I said "I wasn't goth, I was alternative, or punk rock. But yes, I've known black goth people, and even black men who are in the gay bear subculture." "Yeah, but there's faggots in every race," he says. "Huh?" "Like this guy right here," he says referring to Gerardo, a young Honduran guy who worked at the ribs station. "Right, faggot?" I was in a bad mood. I said "I don't like that kind of language." I waved him off, and walked off. Gerardo asked me "What's he saying to me, that I'm a faggot [culero]?" I went back to my "Louisiana" table. A few minutes later Vincent came up to me and says "Yo come on, did that offend you? I told him I was sorry. I'm just playing with him. That's how I just joke with him. I didn't mean anything by it. You didn't have to get angry and walk off and come hide over here, acting all like the trick. I was like damn, she *is* a girl." I said "no, I just didn't want to be involved in that. I just don't like to talk like that." "Well do you accept my apology?" he asks. "Yes, I accept your apology." "Well can I get a piece of gum now?"

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

PRISMATIC ENGAGEMENT: LATINO/A AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKERS' ENCOUNTERS IN A SOUTHERN MEATPACKING PLANT

"Janet, the thing is that this country belongs to whites. This is the whites' country. They are the owners of this country. In other words, this is their country." - *Claudia, Salvadoran worker*

When Claudia stared at Michael from across her machine, and told me that when she ever left Swine's for good she would say to him "goodbye, stupid nigger," I had responded with indignation. I asked Claudia why she saw the misdeeds of blacks so clearly, and why this was always articulated in racialized terms when the same was not the case for whites, even though whites were the real power holders in society. She had responded sternly that when it came to the workplace, she felt it was blacks who oppressed them. But beyond this, Claudia was puzzled by my concern. "What do you have against whites? The *negros* can do anything and you defend them." I tried to explain to her that I was against racism, and that the United States had a horrific history of oppression of black people, from slavery to segregation and beyond. I told Claudia that I felt part of the struggle against racism was denouncing unearned privileges of whiteness that contribute to the oppression of others. "No, why not? If I was white, but I mean born in this country, I would be terrible," she interjected. Throughout this encounter, Claudia would ask me such questions as why "nigger" was such an offensive term to African Americans when she would not be hurt if someone called her a "wetback," and during my digressions into American

race relations history, Claudia would suddenly interrupt with a re-declaration of her parting words to Michael. I tried to engage Claudia in a discussion about race and power in the U.S., but she accepted without much in the way of protestation that "this country belongs to whites." Therefore, at least as Claudia sees it, the power wielded by whites over others in American society is in some sense legitimate.

In this Conclusion, I summarize key contributions and findings of my research for the study of Latino/a migrant incorporation in the New South and intergroup relations. In the first section, I outline the major critiques of research on Latino/a migrant incorporation and intergroup relations that I address in this dissertation. In the second section, I discuss the concept of prismatic engagement, explaining how it contributes to the analysis of relations among subordinate groups in the U.S. To do so, I build on the major findings and arguments that I present in Chapters Two through Seven, which are summarized in the first section of this chapter.

ADVANCING THE STUDY OF LATINO/A MIGRANT INCORPORATION AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN MATURING DESTINATIONS

In this dissertation, I have reviewed key sociological perspectives on intergroup relations as well as major findings from recent research on intergroup relations in new migration destination in the U.S South. I have proposed extensions to analytical frameworks and concepts, including the model of ethnic succession and the concept of racial alienation, to make these better suited to the study of relations among subordinate groups, in this case, Latinos and African Americans. I have also argued forcefully for situating the study of intergroup relations in the crucial social domain of the workplace, a context in which Latino/a migrants and African Americans encounter one another in structured ways that are likely meaningfully related to how

they think about and act towards the other. Further, I advance the concept of prismatic engagement to capture the mediating role of white dominance in relations among subordinate groups, an issue that scholars have not adequately taken account of. There are also myriad critiques of the extant literature that other scholars have raised and which this dissertation addresses. I briefly discuss these first, before turning to a discussion of how my research advances our understanding of intergroup relations in the New South.

Most studies of Latino/a migration to the U.S. South are purely descriptive case studies (e.g. Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005; Arreola 2004), though recent contributions by Marrow (2011) and López-Sanders (2009) make advances towards synchronizing theory with data on Latino/a migrant incorporation in new destinations. But in general, scholars have noted insufficient efforts to construct empirical designs that are linked to theoretical frameworks, to situate research findings in the broader literatures on migrant incorporation or race relations, or to propose new conceptual tools let alone paradigm shifts associated with changing migration patterns that are supposed to represent a dramatic departure from pre-1990 patterns (Waters and Jiménez 2005). Researchers have acknowledged the need to synthesize explanations of intra- and inter-group interaction, to study interethnic relations between minority groups, to recognize the importance of objective conditions as well as perceptions and discourse, and the need to study broad social processes in local settings in new destinations (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005: 253). These limitations are accompanied by a tendency to pose analyses of incorporation processes in a simplistic good versus bad framework, particularly in terms of the quality of intergroup relations. That is, many studies give only superficial treatment to the substance of group dynamics and discourse, privileging often tentative conclusions about how "successfully" Latino migrants are becoming integrated into the social fabric of their new communities. As an

ethnography, this dissertation is rich in thick description of people, scenes, and processes, but I also attempt to link these to the larger analytical questions I set out to answer. I do not seek to define relations between Latino/a and African American workers as either good or bad; rather, I attempt to understand the conditions that motivate the thrust rather than the totality of their relations.

In Chapter Two, I framed the macro social and economic contexts that condition Latino/a migration to nontraditional destinations in the American South and their contribution to the region's agroindustrial complex as its premier labor force at the turn of the twenty-first century. In this second chapter, I drew attention to the stories of Latina/o migrants, the chief protagonists of the remarkable transformation of workplaces throughout the U.S. South. Within this discussion, I incorporated a gender lens, focusing especially on the migration and labor market experiences of Central American women, who have received less attention than their male and Mexican counterparts so far in the literature on Latino/a migration to nontraditional destinations, even though they form a significant and growing component of the phenomenon in the contemporary American South. I highlighted the paths that different migrants followed to arrive in North Carolina, and developed an understanding of these women and men as a crucial component of the agroindustrial labor force of the rural U.S. South.

This chapter then situated the theoretical debates about broad shifts in the ethnic/racial composition of industries and workplaces throughout the U.S. South and beyond, a process that has been referred to as ethnic succession, by examining how these changes occurred at the micro-level of a meatpacking plant in North Carolina. I laid out the context of change at Swine's Inc. – the legal-political conditions, industrial strategies, and social network mechanisms that together shaped the process of ethnic succession at Swine's and probably at workplaces

throughout the agroindustrial complex of the U.S. South. In the early 1970s, twenty years after the then-small, family-run meatpacking plant began operations, dozens of mostly young, African American workers went on strike to protest unfair labor practices, and campaigned unsuccessfully for union representation at the plant. By the early-1990s, when the United Food and Commercial Workers launched another effort at organizing workers at Swine's, small numbers of Latinos/migrants had started to work at the plant, trickling in from the broader agroindustrial complex of animal farms and poultry processing plants where they had already begun working in larger number. Remarkably, the union won the representation election, but this victory was overturned in the courts.

At the same time, the transformation of Swine's workforce from majority African American to majority Latino accelerated rapidly, and by the late 1990s, the shift was complete, and growing numbers of Honduran, Mexican, and Salvadoran women joined the ranks of workers after 2000. Throughout this period, employers' hiring preferences regarding workers were realigned to favor Latino/a migrants. But the 1990s was also a period when the animal production and processing industries in the area saw significant growth, and coupled with a declining availability of African American workers, labor control through displacement of the incumbent African American workforce likely coincided with replacement and simple growth mechanisms. Critically, however, management's ability to enact its preferences regarding workers was subject to the broader sociopolitical environment, and manipulable through its own Human Resource policies.

In the latter part of the first decade of the twentieth century, management found its ability to enact its preferences highly circumscribed by the dramatic shifts in U.S. workplace immigration law enforcement and the larger exclusionary legislative trend this was embedded in.

The pendulum began to swing in the other direction, as the precarious position of unauthorized Latino/a workers was fully exposed. A noticeable shift in hiring towards African American and older, more established or second-generation Latinos occurred, with very few Latino/a migrants gaining entry and many unauthorized workers finding themselves part of a grand, if gradual, purge. Yet, management was not prepared to fully relinquish control in securing the kinds of workers it had the most taste for, and crafted Human Resource policies that restricted the eligibility of many potential hires. A new stage of ethnic succession at Swine's took all workers, Latino/as and African Americans, by surprise as Haitian refugees, steered by company officials in Virginia, began to take positions on the line at a staggering pace in January 2011. I argue that the ethnic succession model's built-in assumptions about the relationship between mechanisms of compositional change – displacement versus replacement – and the likelihood of intergroup conflict are perhaps better suited to studying large-scale aggregate change but unnecessarily limit analysis of the actual social relations between workers at Swine's. Actual social relations may or may not be determined primarily by the mechanisms that drive compositional change, but factors beyond these mechanisms may also play as important a function or more. I also propose that the shifting preferences of employers for Latino/a migrant workers positioned this group at an advantage at the hiring phase, but at a disadvantage relative to other groups, such as African Americans, within the social organization of labor once hired. The very feature that make immigrants attractive to employers, in this case the capacity for subordination that makes them appealing to management at Swine's, is also likely to be the basis for their disadvantage relative to other groups of workers within the social organization of labor on the shop floor.

In Chapter Three, I began to develop the analysis that forms the crux of this book, along with Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven, calling attention to the symbolic expression of group

boundaries. This third chapter traced the categories and meanings of shop floor racial talk with parallel attention to the diverse ethnoracial panoramas in Latina/o migrants' origin countries. How are the terms *moyo*, *negro*, and *moreno* used at work? What does this suggest about how Latinos view African Americans as a group? And how does this language relate to pre-migration ideas about blacks and blackness? Immersed participant observation over an extended period of time at Swine's permitted analysis of how work – as a setting that brings together multiple groups and subjectivities, as a structure that organizes the positions these groups and subjectivities occupy, and as a process that mediates the experience of oppression and exploitation – conditions the articulation of symbolic boundaries between groups that are meaningfully engaged with one another.

I showed that Latina/o workers rely on a variety of symbolic resources that communicate understandings and representations of African Americans that are held in common. An important, but understudied type of symbolic resource involves language, namely, the forms of ethnoracial identification that designate understandings of African Americans *as a group*. I showed how the use of such categorical language is much more prevalent among Latina/os towards African Americans than the converse, and examined the features of one particularly salient designation of African Americans as *moyos*, a term whose valence is indefinite and situational, but frequently acquires pejorative significance. I traced the transnational origins of this identification, finding that its adaptation and propagation occurs within the transnational spaces that Latina/o migrants occupy.

I also probed the ethnoracial panoramas of diverse Latino/a migrants' origin countries, searching for precursors to the self-understandings and representations of groups marked racially as 'other' in the American South where they now find themselves. For example, I argued that the

ethnoracial panorama of Honduras may predispose Honduran migrants to a more fluid, "friendly" posture towards groups marked as 'other' despite the universal devaluation of blackness itself. However, the subordinating experience of being migrants who are "not from here" brings together Honduran and other Latino/a workers in a common position as *hispanos*. Their class proximity to African Americans, and the imperatives of the rigid American racialization system, creates the conditions for strong symbolic boundaries to be drawn. Because symbolic boundaries reflect social boundaries, even as they strive to create, reinforce, or transform these, I considered how the strong symbolic boundaries Latina/o workers draw with their African American counterparts, which frequently assume a negative valence, are tied to these groups' positions within the social organization of labor, and to their emergent sense of group position more broadly.

In Chapters Four and Five, I exposed the character of social relations between workers at Swine's, showing how the symbolic boundaries Latina/os express are rooted in their perception that they are the most oppressively exploited workers and that African Americans occupy a privileged place within the social organization of labor. These chapters elaborate my study findings about intergroup relations and develop their intersection with labor relations and dynamics, particularly exploitation, subordination, and resistance. In Chapter Four, I call attention to the most important social distinction that Latina/o workers make vis-à-vis their African Americans counterparts: their perception that African Americans occupy a privileged position within the social organization of labor and that Latina/os are the most oppressively exploited workers. The strong symbolic boundaries that Latina/o workers draw against African American workers, discussed in Chapter Four, reflect this crucial distinction. In encounters with African American workers, and in comments about them, Latina/os express their resentment in

hyperbolic declarations that they are "going to come painted black so they don't have to work" and in casting African American workers as "lazy" they attempt to even out their statuses – at least symbolically, filling in the initial boundary that was outlined through bold and persistent ethnoracial identification. I draw on Bobo and Hutchins (1996) concept of racial alienation, which refers to the degree to which group members feel enfranchised or aggrieved, to explain my findings about strong and substantially negative boundary-making by Latino/a workers at Swine's. In the context of Swine's, Latinos rather than African Americans feel the greatest sense of racial alienation. At the same time, this suggests that scholars have too narrowly focused on direct competition for resources as the primary motivator of intergroup conflict. In doing so, they have mostly looked at the incumbent group – African Americans – as the group likely to feel a competitive threat and therefore to react in exclusionary ways that spur intergroup conflict. I show that other deprivations can drive intergroup conflict. In this case, Latinos' conviction that they are especially disadvantaged relative to African Americans in the workplace is the primary source of intergroup conflict. At the same time, it is important to remember that playfulness and banter is a common communicative device in interactions between Latina/o and African American workers, one that sometimes reinforces but bridges boundaries between them.

At times, Latina/o workers attempted to challenge oppressive exploitation at Swine's, but this resistance tended to succumb to an acceptance of super-exploitation itself, and proceeded to challenge instead African Americans' perceived ability to escape its most oppressive elements (e.g. "Morenos have to work like we do"). In Chapter Five, I delved into the experience of super-exploitation and subjugation to a brutal labor discipline regime and describe the social organization of labor, laying out the ethnoracial makeup of various jobs. It is the *perception* of relative privilege and disadvantage that shapes how Latina/os view African American workers'

and their own group's position in the workplace. I argue that the vulnerabilities of "illegality" that objectively mark only unauthorized migrants bleed onto the group as a whole, *hispanos*, because supervisors on the shop floor use the group as a shorthand for the qualities that make the former so tractable. I further argue that, whereas scholars have drawn attention to the mechanism of "deportability" that undergirds the vulnerabilities of unauthorized migrants, in a more proximate sense for the unauthorized migrant worker their vulnerabilities stem from their special "disposability." But it should not be surprising if, for a variety of reasons, including the distinct vulnerabilities of 'illegality' that mark all Latina/o migrants regardless of authorization status and bring them together as *hispanos*, but also the native-born advantages of being "from here," having citizenship, and speaking English, native-born workers really did occupy a position of relative privilege. The critical point, however, is that these advantages are viewed by Latina/os to accrue to black Americans as *blacks* rather than as *Americans* more generally.

In Chapter Six, I show how the composition of the authority structure affects the intergroup dynamics explained in Chapters Four and Five. Latina/o workers view an African American-dominated authority structure as contributing to the perceived privileged position of African American workers (e.g. "since they're the same color"), while viewing white authority as impartial in applying labor discipline to all workers ("he treats everyone the same"). I had the opportunity to study these dynamics when, after seven months of working in the Loin Boning and Packing Department, the African American superintendent was forced out and replaced with a white superintendent. Therefore, I had a chance to observe these dynamics before, during, and for two months following this transition. For some Latina/o workers, this shift caused them to redirect their resentment away from the perception of unequal treatment between Latina/o and black workers, and towards a repudiation of the deterioration of working conditions for *all*

workers which many workers attributed to the new, white superintendent. For other workers, this change in the authority structure, and what it was believed to represent for the erstwhile privileged African American workers, presented an opportunity to rejoice in the loss of perceived black privilege, and even benefit from alliance with white authority whose goodwill was now achieved on individualistic terms (e.g. "Goodbye nigger!"). Yet, even for those few Latina/o workers whose resentment was redirected, their attribution was never articulated in racial terms as it was towards the African American supervisor.

On the other hand, the comparatively weaker symbolic boundaries that African Americans draw vis-à-vis their Latina/o counterparts must be explained. In Chapter Seven, I question whether the modal tendency can be characterized as exclusionary, as other scholars have argued, or whether ambivalence is a more fitting description. First, I suggest that, as a group, African Americans at Swine's do not articulate strong boundaries against Latinos because they do not feel resentment rooted in a sense of relative deprivation vis-à-vis Latinos. This is the logical corollary to an understanding that Latino/a workers, not African Americans, feel the greatest sense of racial alienation at Swine's. Second, although Latinos and African Americans are both convinced that some members of the other group dislike them in ethnoracial terms, among Latinos especially rumors about the ill-intentions of out-group members are fostered by in-group mistrust, making for sharper intergroup boundaries. Third, race relations and immigration scholars' expectation that economic competition leads African Americans to feel their sense of group position threatened runs into problems when African Americans' views about immigrants are compared to whites', and when African Americans' attitudes about Latinos are considered alongside Latinos attitudes about them. Studies show that African Americans'

views are more favorable of Latinos than whites' and more favorable of Latinos than Latinos' views of them.

Yet another explanation should be obvious, but seems to be overlooked so far because research has tended to focus on only one dimension of intergroup relations – African Americans' supposed attitudes and behavior towards Latinos stemming from competitive threat – rather than the complex interplay of relations that shape Latino/a migrants' social incorporation as an active and ongoing process. Whatever collective experiences individual Latino/a migrants may have been a part of in their origin communities, their defining collective experience as migrants in the U.S. is the fusion of disparate national and sub-national subjectivities into an aggregate identification – by others most definitely, and increasingly by themselves – as *hispanos*. In contrast, although African Americans are by no means homogenous, they nonetheless share a collective history, memory, and in many ways experience that forged them as a group a long time ago. Hence, the forceful boundary-making on the part of Latino/a workers reflects the flurry of activity typical of a group *as yet in formation*, whose position in the American stratified system of belonging is uncertain and characterized by multiple pathways. Further, I build on the concept of "linked fate," which refers to the degree to which group members feel their individual fortunes to be tied to that of the group as a whole (Dawson 1994). Scholars hypothesize that groups with a high sense of linked fate – like African Americans, whose solidaristic policy preferences have been explained with reference to this concept – will also be more likely to display solidarity with other subordinate groups. I propose that linked fate may play a role in accounting for my findings, a possibility that scholarship narrowly focused on competition perspectives has not sufficiently considered.[71]

[71] If readers still question the robustness of the findings I report, Yanira's experience lends strong support to major features of my analysis. Yanira, a young Dominican packer in the Loin Boning and Packing Department, whose

ambiguous ethnoracial status was commonly misidentified by Latinos and African Americans alike, also blurred group boundaries by socializing with Latino, African American, and white workers outside of Swine's. In fact, soon after she started working at Swine's around October 2010, Yanira moved in with Kendra, a rare white recent hire in the Loin Boning and Packing Department. Yanira also became friends with Vincent outside of work, visiting him at home and drinking together. Her ambiguous ethnoracial status gave her a view of intergroup relations from where the peripheries converge, that is, from a self-identified Latina subjectivity frequently first encountered as black by others.

"Most of people get along most of the days. But I think they're kind of prejudiced – the Mexicans – a little bit, when other people from other places come in. Like with me, at the beginning, they wouldn't really talk to me. Until I started talking Spanish. And I didn't even want to talk Spanish. But somebody didn't know how to speak English, so I thought why am I being a jerk, let me speak Spanish. And I started speaking Spanish. I started saying I was Dominican. And then they started being nice to me. I didn't say it right away, but around the third day I started saying it. More of them talk to me now.

With me it's kind of weird because I'm Hispanic but my skin is dark. Not all of them do, but I specifically notice it. Because like I said at the beginning…and now I speak Spanish to everybody. At the beginning, the black people were friendly and nice to me. I wouldn't speak Spanish, not a lick, nothing. There's no need. These people speak English. I wasn't around the Spanish people then. They kept putting me with the English-speaking people. At first…Then Alma started speaking to me. She doesn't know English. The Mexicans – not all of them are Mexicans – but the Spanish-speaking people started to help me. And they tell me you're not black, you're just dark-skinned. "Tu *moya* no eres," Rosa tells me that. And they just treat them weird [blacks in general, Haitians in particular]. They make fun of them. Look how black they are. And some of them, you don't know if they're a boy or a girl [Haitians]. Sometimes I'm like God, if I hadn't spoken Spanish. The native Mexicans and those types, because us Dominicans and the little Puerto Ricans that are there, they don't treat people like that. But the Mexicans, they're just prejudiced. Because I've noticed – you know Lina [Indian worker identified as white]? She talked to me. And Emily [white worker]. So it's not the white people. I thought you was a moya. Look at this nigga trying to speak Spanish. I said shut up, nigga. I be an ass. You know who treated me a little different. Michael. He's a sweetheart, he helps everyone. One day he heard me speaking English, and he says "Where'd you learn English?" I'm thinking "Hello, we're in America." I told him I came here when I was 6 years old, so that's how I know English. And at first, Don was trying to intimidate everybody. And I was thinking "I have my papers."

I know that the white people, they talk to whoever and anybody. Some black people are also racist too. They don't talk to everybody. Some of them. Some of them do talk to everybody. Some "Oh my god, you talk Spanish?" and they look at you with a face like "Oh, I thought she was one of us." In the Shipping area, the guys. Mostly when people found out that I speak Spanish, some people treated me not the same, and some people treated me better, and some people didn't care. They're like "Oh cool, you're bilingual."

Truth is, the white people are just free. That's how I see it. They speak and talk to anybody and everybody. The black people – they hold off, sometimes. They're not exactly prejudiced, but they hold off to who they speak to, sometimes. And mainly, in my opinion, it's the Mexicans. Not the Mexicans because they're not all Mexicans so I can't be prejudiced either. But most of them – Spanish-speaking people – they're, in my opinion, the most prejudiced. That's what I saw. Because they've never been anywhere but their place [Latinos]. 'Cause some of them are like Dominican Republic, what is that?"

In the end, though, Yanira points to the imperative to get along when your job hinges on brute interdependence. But her more refined analysis is as profound as it is unique, given her ambiguous ethnoracial status. It shows that group boundaries are sharp and mutually exclusive, and invested with affective significance. Moreover, as Yanira sees it,

The big story that brings together these chapters is that while Latina/os' encounters with African Americans at work contribute to their negative perceptions about *blacks*, it is, beyond other factors, blacks' status as *Americans* that actually creates the conditions of relative advantage and disadvantage Latina/os deem unfair. Latinas' boundary work vis-à-vis African American workers implicates whiteness often without directly identifying it. Neither historically nor in the present have African Americans been the principal sponsors of exclusionary immigration legislation. They have neither actively nor directly articulated the exclusionary positions that have migrants in a state of persecution, and my research shows that at the workplace level, African Americans do not encounter Latinos as if they are particularly threatened. I propose that by conceptualizing Latino-African American relations as *prismatic engagement*, we recognize that whiteness not only mediates relations between subordinate groups, but also that subordinate groups view one another very differently through the prism of white dominance. Although I have discussed limitations to this research in each chapter, several potential limitations deserve some consideration here. This is, after all, a study of one meatpacking plant in North Carolina. As such, some readers may question how generalizable my findings may be. This is a valid concern, but I argue that my research design, which involved working in multiple departments of different sizes, compositions, and kinds of work, bolster the reliability and potential generalizability of my findings to other working class contexts with similar compositional features and structural conditions in which Latino/a migrants are embedded in the American South. A related and equally valid challenge involves a counterfactual. Would the prevalence of *racialized* resentment on the part of Latinos be similar in a context in which their main counterparts were native-born whites rather than African

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Latinos – not African Americans – draw the boldest and most negatively inflected boundaries vis-à-vis other groups, especially African Americans.

Americans? Undoubtedly, this is a fascinating question, and one that future research may attempt to address. However, given the differences in the content of Latinos' discursive repertoire aimed at white and African American workers and supervisors at Swine's, I would not expect this to be the case. Still, it poses an interesting avenue that future research in this area may wish to pursue.

PRISMATIC ENGAGEMENT: SUBORDINATE GROUP RELATIONS IN A SYSTEM OF BELONGING CHARACTERIZED BY WHITE DOMINANCE

Immigration and race/ethnicity scholars have been eager to evaluate the effect that massive immigration from Latin America that began in 1965 but expanded significantly in the late 1980s will have on the American system of racialized stratification (Marrow 2011; Lee and Bean 2007; Gans 1999). Several different propositions of an emerging order that transforms the black-white binary stand out, including the possibility of a white-nonwhite divide, a black-nonblack divide, and a tri-racial divide. If not precipitated, attempting to adjudicate between these propositions – which correspond to *outcomes* – at a time when the *process* of incorporation is very much still under way would benefit from attention to the dynamic conditions that are contributing to this transformation. This dissertation sheds light on these dynamics, viewing the incorporation of Latino/a migrants as a process of mutual adjustment by which groups both achieve and are ascribed social positions in a stratified system of belonging.

Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory posits that Asian Americans inhabit dual roles in the American "field of racial positions," being valorized relative to blacks but simultaneously devalued as civic outsiders and perpetual foreigners. Drawing on Kim's theory, Marrow has argued that Latinos experience discrimination in the American South along two dimensions – one related to "race" and one related to "citizenship" – which parallel those outlined by Kim. Marrow (2011; 2007) argues that Latino/a migrants feel the greatest discrimination along the citizenship dimension, and they point to African Americans rather than whites as the group that

treats them in the most exclusionary ways. My findings, based on sixteen months of participant observation totaling more than 5,000 hours on the production lines of a Southern meatpacking plant, and supplemented by 25 in-depth interviews with Latinos and African Americans, challenge these conclusions. I suggest that methodological flaws and theoretical narrowness with substantive implications have produced misguided and misleading conclusions.

Scholars rightly point out that discrimination and exclusion can occur along two axes, and Latinos interviewed by researchers may very well report that they feel greater discrimination from African Americans than whites. But, as I have argued in this dissertation, it is methodologically problematic to extrapolate actual attitudes and behavior of African Americans from Latinos' accounts. It is also theoretically myopic to limit the possible range of grievances that can motivate intergroup relations and conflict to competition. This dissertation, which combines immersed participant observation and interviews with an analytic lens that considers sources of grievance other than competition, presents a very different picture of relations between Latinos and African Americans. And by situating the study in the workplace, the context that most defines the lives of working class migrants and native-born groups alike, I uncover important conditions that shape relations between these groups.

First, I argue that the concept of prismatic engagement incorporates the centrality of white dominance to analysis of relations between subordinate groups. White dominance mediates subordinate group relations in a number of ways, as I have shown in the preceding chapters. Latino/a migrants enter the American field of racial positions already predisposed to view blackness negatively, based on the racialization schemes of their communities of origin. In Southern workplaces like Swine's, African Americans are the main group they encounter in similar class positions as workers. Whites are almost entirely absent from the workforce. Even

some Latina workers who are certain that blacks are "more racist" towards Latinos than whites acknowledge that there are hardly any whites working at Swine's. Furthermore, these workers acknowledge that their perceptions about discrimination and intergroup relations are shaped almost entirely by their experiences at work, where they spend a majority of their time.

Because African American workers are seen as having the less difficult or strenuous jobs and as more able to escape the most oppressive elements of exploitation at Swine's, Latinos develop resentment towards them. In a context where white workers are scarce, and preconditioned to view blackness negatively, perceptions of difference in the positions occupied by Latinos and African Americans within the social organization of labor produces a resentment that is racialized and which paradoxically assigns value to being black in this micro-context. The perception that African Americans in positions of authority augment African American worker privilege, while whites in positions of authority are viewed as fair and neutral (or as oppressive but never *because* they are white), demonstrates how white dominance mediates the encounters between Latinos and African Americans at Swine's. Claudia's comments in the encounter that opens this chapter suggest that, in any case, the power wielded by whites over other groups is in some sense legitimate. This raises a second issue that has not adequately been considered by scholars, and which is also captured by the analogic concept of prismatic engagement.

African Americans are not necessarily, as some scholars presume, "insiders" along the axis of citizenship – at least not in the same way as white Americans. Claudia's comments at the beginning of this chapter suggest precisely this point, that African Americans – like Latinos – in some sense do not "own" this country as do whites. And the common elision between "Americans" and "whites" or "bolillos," but rarely between "Americans" and "blacks" or "moyos," in Latinos' discursive repertoire is also suggestive of African Americans' marginal

inclusion along this dimension. And in fact, African American and Latino/a workers both accuse each other of "looking down" on the other. While scholars have usefully drawn on racial triangulation theory to explain Latino-African American relations, I call into question the idea that disadvantage along the racial and civic exclusion dimensions both extend to Latinos while only the racial dimension extends to African Americans. Indeed, the pitfall in Marrow's application of racial triangulation theory to relations among subordinate groups is that it does not properly incorporate the mediating role played by white dominance in conditioning how these groups encounter one another in a field of racial positions.

This determining role of white dominance is precisely what Kim (1999) emphasizes in explaining Asian Americans dual position in the "field of racial positions" as valorized relative to blacks and devalued as perpetual foreigners. I argue that the axis of exclusion as civic outsiders does not unequivocally place African Americans as insiders precisely because of the mediating role of white dominance in the U.S. and in Latino/a migrants' communities of origin. Ultimately, when African American and Latina/o workers encounter one another at Swine's they do so looking through the prism of white dominance, giving relations between these groups the qualities of prismatic engagement. The nature of each group's experience means that African Americans and Latinos view one another rather differently through the refractory lens of this prism. And yet, perhaps at times Latino/a workers at Swine's, even those who most vehemently articulate strong and negatively valenced boundaries vis-à-vis their African American counterparts, glean the group struggle in the American racialized system of belonging in ways that intuit some solidarity across subordinate group boundaries. I asked Claudia over lunch one afternoon at a McDonald's if there was racism in this country. She responded with her characteristic mix of seriousness and dark humor:

> "In the country? I think so, same as everywhere. We're not from here. They don't want us [I asked on whose part toward whom?] The *hispanos* and the *negros*. It's that we're not from here. From the Americans, the *bolillos* you could say. We come to invade their country, they don't want us! Sorry, I don't care! If they don't like it, they can go to El Salvador. They can go and I'll stay here."

Unlike much of Claudia's previous commentary, her response to my questions about whether racism exists in the U.S., who is subject to it, and who perpetrates it suggests that at some level, Claudia views Latinos and African Americans as sharing a similar subordinate, outsider position relative to whites. In accepting Latinos' perceptions about African Americans' attitudes and behaviors toward them as *fact*, rather than attempting to understand how these groups encounter one another in a setting, structure, and process that molds their relationship to one another and conditions Latina/o migrants' emergent sense of group position within the broader American stratified system of belonging, we fall short as researchers. We contribute to the invisibility of white nativism in current anti-immigrant movements and reinforce Latinas' blindness to white power in producing their subordinate status, while missing altogether their active effort to achieve incorporation as nonblacks, as well as *how* and *why* they do so. We also neglect what may be the most important point – that by improving the labor protections and working conditions of *all* workers regardless of authorization status, a virtue in itself, you also diminish the bases for employers' preferences and disparate treatment, and therefore also for conflict among Latina/o and African American workers, and the perpetuation into the indefinite future of racialized forms of group-based inequality.[72]

[72] Some readers may draw the conclusion that employer sanctions "work." I would qualify this interpretation in several respects, and suggest a different course of action. Undoubtedly, the threat of government investigation and sanctions pushes many corporate bosses to direct their human resources minions to comply with work authorization verification requirements. But employers are rarely sanctioned, despite the fact that they frequently knowingly hire workers lacking authorization either as a strategy to create a super-exploitable work force or because the pool of available workers with authorization is insufficient to meet labor demand. Indeed, agroindustrial giants have pursued

a strategy of plant relocation to rural and sometimes remote areas with the expectation of drawing workers ever since IBP innovated this union-busting approach in the 1980s.

When employers are sanctioned, such as at the Postville, Iowa raid, workers and the broader community often suffer the most. In Postville, the costs and disruption to production that raids exerted left the company unable to carry on business, and the entire economy of a small town was dealt a crippling blow by the plant closing and the mass exodus of people following the raid. A years-long investigation into Tyson, where the company faced accusations of actual involvement in human smuggling (such charges are even more rarely brought against employers) ended in acquittal. Some will argue that the audit-style pursued by the Obama administration is less disruptive and more humane, but it is really just a polite way of conducting a raid. Others have supported the E-verify program, including making employer participation obligatory. But numerous problems have arisen in the use of this program. Even when employers participate in E-verify, it is clear that they are apparently allowed to dispose of unauthorized workers essentially at their leisure and convenience, robbing them of paid vacations and bonuses that are accrued over time through hard work and self-negation. Further, when a worker loses her job because it is suddenly discovered that her papers are of questionable authenticity, she frequently ends up taking a job at a firm in a similar industry that operates at a sub-peripheral level. Now, instead of working a Swine's knife job at $12.50 an hour with good health benefits for her and her children, she does the same work for $8.00 an hour, without benefits. Does this seem like it "works" and for whom?

It may be that today black and white workers in the American South share a sense of linked fate that is most prominent in recessionary times, and can manifest itself in anti-immigrant expression (López-Sanders 2009), though I believe the specific economic circumstances of a firm and incumbent black and white workers' location within the organization of production mediate the effects of broad economic conditions. At the factory I studied, although the economic recession was in full swing, the company appeared to be riding it out well, perhaps creating a micro-economic context that was less conducive to tensions between workers as might have been the case otherwise.

If the concern is really for the conditions workers face in the labor market and American workplaces, the solution is to strengthen and expand protections to all workers. In doing so, you diminish the bases by which employers embolden distinctions among workers that represent their relative exploitability. Although the National Labor Relations Act prohibits employers from threatening workers with contacting immigration authorities to thwart union support during an organizing drive, this happens routinely. And, nothing prevents employers from suddenly and conveniently "discovering" a worker's unauthorized status and firing them because of it. Despite the fact that unions have the right and obligation to represent all workers regardless of their authorization status, many workers do not know this is the case. This is partly why unauthorized workers who are sympathetic to unions and who believe collective representation is the only way to improve working conditions are nonetheless too often afraid to act. Note that these arguments operate within a nationalistic-universal labor rights framework. Beyond these arguments, I support a fundamental human right to migrate, particularly so when the free mobility of capital is a major contributing cause of people's need to do so. And, when the U.S. has deep and long-standing asymmetrical ties to a country from which people are migrating, as is the case in Mexico and Central America. Because the debates about controlling migration are so often transparently about defining who belongs, and the chief sponsors of movements and measures targeting immigrants pander to white lower middle-class conservatism – not the working class African Americans that are supposed to be most threatened economically by unauthorized migrants – we need to lay bare the issues for what they are: nativist reaction in the service of white nationalism.

The laissez-faire approach of some scholars who advocate for the rights of migrants and against punitive enforcement measures is not a solution either. All too often, enforcement programs are condemned but the valid underlying concerns about working conditions are not addressed. Sometimes, the "hardworking" character of migrants and their acceptance of substandard conditions of employment are extolled as virtues that benefit the U.S. economy. Calls for reform that narrowly focus on legalization serve the interests of capital very well, and in a

cynical way those of the desperate and hardworking migrant supposedly eager to accept subordination in American workplaces, while deferring to the future the repetition of current struggles surrounding employment of unauthorized migrants. Tom Hensley, the president of Fieldale Farms Corp. in North Georgia and former chairman of the National Chicken Council, recently addressed lawmakers at a Senate Special Committee on Immigration and Georgia's Economy in Gainesville, opposing statewide legislation targeting immigrants (which passed, following Arizona, and now South Carolina has passed similar legislation). Hensley told lawmakers:

"We were 67 percent Hispanic in 2004. Our turnover was 25 percent. Our workers (compensation) cost was $50,000 a month. Our health care cost for the whole year was $8 million. It was about that time that the federal, state and local governments let it be known that these folks are not welcome. Fast forward to 2010, we're about 33 percent Hispanic now. Our turnover is 75 percent. Workers comp costs are $150,000 a month. Our health care last year was $20 million. Those are staggering numbers, but that's the economic reality." (Galloway 2011).

Let's say we believe Hensley that as the company's Latino workforce was cut in half in the span of 6 years, turnover and workers' compensation costs tripled, and health care costs more than doubled. Without a doubt, these are the cries of employers all over the U.S., who have found their once nearly unfettered access to migrant workers significantly curtailed. What are we to conclude from this? You can conclude that Latino (probably many unauthorized) labor saved the company loads of money. But who is this a good thing for? Workers' compensation costs are real; the fact that they tripled shows that these costs were kept artificially low, probably because company personnel dissuaded, misinformed, or outright unlawfully kept injured workers from filing claims. Even tripled, these costs are surely on the lower end of where they would be if the repetitive motion injuries many workers suffer were included. As for health care costs, assuming that many Latino workers were unauthorized, many enroll but rarely if ever use their employer-sponsored insurance out of fear that they will get in trouble (because many work under assumed identities) and some workers are too afraid to sign up at all. Even low turnover, usually attributed to the work ethic of migrants, is kept artificially low by the limited mobility of workers who lack authorization status and may be using assumed identities, making it risky to change jobs. In explaining why they see native-born workers as less likely to stay on at hog plant, many such workers say it is "because if they leave this job, they can go get a job anywhere else, or they can collect unemployment." If even I, a fluently bilingual, PhD-educated woman had a very difficult time navigating workers' compensation and health claims while working for a major corporation that has received a lot of attention in the media, we can only imagine what the experience is for a migrant who speaks very limited English and has a low level of education – especially if she lacks authorization status. It is hard to align with the position of business leaders like Hensley because it requires complicity with their destructive exploitation of migrant workers' vulnerabilities.

At a time when business and its allies have launched the most massive coordinated assault on labor in decades – made all the more egregious because they seized the opportunities created by the economic crisis they had engineered in the first place – it may seem incongruous, even impossible, to insist on the expansion of worker protections. But this is the only avenue that has the potential for greatly diminishing the bases of employer demand for unauthorized workers and the problematic aspects for all workers that is associated with it.

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