

Introduction

Lives on The Line: Carving Out A New South

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 be some of my closest coworkers, 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 fifteen, 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.

At thirty-three, 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 multicounty 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 other workers' knife skills—like those of Thomas and Rosa—from sharpening the knife to actually using it. Cristina left behind a four-year-old son and a five-year-old daughter with her in-laws in Olancho, whom she had lived with after Ernesto left, in what she depicts as conditions of servitude. Her daughter made the dangerous journey with another of her husband's brothers several years later, and now, at twelve years old, she says without a hint of irony, but much to her parents' amusement, that she wants to be an FBI agent when she grows up. Cristina's 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 coworkers respects Cristina's knife skills, often depending on her to sharpen his knives. Thomas is a fifty-three-year-old African American man 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/a. 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 he has to lead in pro-

ducing huge orders of “curlies”—a rib that is skinned on the backside using a small handheld hook, and that Cristina says is for rich people. The work is grueling, *un trabajo perro* (dog’s work, hard work), as 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, as he skins ribs and fills giant combos 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, he 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 does waft my way. On short breaks, Thomas leans into the chain-link fence outside the factory while smoking his cigarette, staring through the links at 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 hunchbacked, Rosa has receding gums that give her mouth a concave appearance, like she is missing all her teeth, not just the bottom set. She is a forty-five-year-old Salvadoran who migrated first to Los Angeles from Santa Ana, living there for ten years before returning to El Salvador in order to regularize her status through her then-husband. She returned in 2006, later 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 toward righteousness through her Evangelical church, each of her daughters compounds 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 general teenage defiance. Rosa also has a three-year-old son with her most recent husband, a twenty-five-year-old Honduran man who works on the boning line and who abandoned her for another woman, though she still meets him clandestinely against her better judgment and maintains a bitter feud with his new *vieja*. She is a rebellious yet individualistic worker, unexpectedly hilarious and foulmouthed, though she is quick to clarify that her ex-husband never knew her that way. Calling people *cara de cuca* (pussyface) is a habit of hers, one that Latina coworkers 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-related gossip and news, Rosa's loose lips are immortalized in her nickname, Radio Bemba. She has been working at Swine's since 2006, deboning small hams and trimming ribs, or bagging ribs when she can avoid knife work, which she frequently attempts to do, leading to confrontations with supervisors. Rosa is a coffee fiend, and on the unsanctioned and ever-contentious midmorning 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.

Linda, an African American woman born in North Carolina but raised in New Jersey, often pairs with Cristina or Thomas at the ribs station, as she does on this Friday morning. Linda recently turned sixty but seems to be going on thirty. She is such a motivated worker that not only is she exempted by Latinas/os 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 coworkers, especially Rosa, tell her 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 who 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 smoker's voice and gravelly laugh. These days she makes it up to Atlantic City from time to time to hit the casinos with her sister, riding one of those chartered tour buses all the way up north for a quick weekend getaway, and she is a regular at the slot machines at the local no-name "Internet Sweepstakes" joint. Her lips shimmer with a berry-infused gloss, the smell of which can become dizzying after hours of direct inhalation while paired with her to bag ribs or loins. Before starting at Swine's in 2008, she managed a liquor store in Parsons but lost that 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 ("Come on, baby! What's wrong?") has earned her the uncomplimentary nickname "Grandma" from some of the younger Black workers.

Vincent is a twenty-nine-year-old African American from Wadeville, North Carolina, who trims ribs at a table near Cristina and Linda. I am

sometimes paired to work with him, but he is paired with someone else on this Friday morning. He has a thick country accent and a peculiar laugh as though his jaw was wired shut. 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 once 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 from time to time as a pallet jack driver or as a trimmer on the loin boning line, jobs he previously held. His cousin Kim worked with me in the Marination Department before my transfer to Loin Boning, and he is shocked that she lasted as long as she did because, in his words, she can't keep a job. Another of his cousins, a lesbian nicknamed Little G, who he and others think is "lazy as hell," is a packer in Loin Boning as well.

Vincent seems 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 (and the young boy he recently found out about). 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 ("Oh, come on. You trying to tell me you never sucked dick?"). 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 coworkers. Vincent, some Latina coworkers 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 *tortuga* (literally "turtle"), the machine that seals the bags containing ribs and other meat products before these go into boxes for shipping. She has worked at Swine's for nine years, and started out bagging loins on the line. Previously she worked at an appliance factory in Roseville, though she is always quick to remind me that she had been a secretary, along with her mother, in the town hall in Aguilar, El Salvador. She made the arduous journey to North Carolina in 1999 from her small town near San Salvador to reunite 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 was once deported. She finally left him because he was cheating on her. Four years after her arrival, Marcos's sister brought the couple's six-year-old son along with her on an undocumented journey to the United States.

After an earthquake struck El Salvador in 2001, Claudia and her son received Temporary Protected Status, which they must renew every eighteen months at a cost of around \$900. She and her husband later had a daughter, who at nine years old expresses the multiple and conflicting ideas she learns at home, at school, in the community, and in the media with such direct, deceptively simple questions as, "Hey, Janet [my first name, and the one printed on my hard hat], 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 around their fingers). On the weekends it is typical for her to go to a *disco mexicana* with friends or a boyfriend and dance to *música norteña* all night while slinging Modelos. She is an attractive, alluring thirty-six-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 in this context 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 Latino/a migrants from Mexico, Central America, and traditional gateway states such as California and Texas. In North Carolina, the Latino/a population grew from 76,726 to 506,206 between 1990 and 2004 (Kasarda and Johnson 2006). By 2010, Latinas/os 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 (United States Census Bureau 2001). (I will henceforth use this name, and the town name of Perry, to refer to the location of Swine's.)

Impressive as they are, these figures do not adequately convey the fine-grained and multidimensional diversity of this area, which is prob-

ably imagined by outsiders to be quite homogenous, dull, and old-fashioned. At Swine's I met people with origins in ten different 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, DC; Coharies and other Native Americans; and even, most exotically among the workers, a few whites. Among my fellow workers there were said to be 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 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 multicounty 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 Latinas/os living in the state in 2000 (United States Census Bureau 2001). Some are newcomers; others are long-term settlers, many with growing families, 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 part of the twentieth century, and 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 such as 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 the present ethnography of a large hog processing plant in North Carolina that has been undergoing demographic and economic restructuring for at least twenty years, where I worked approximately 3,500 hours over sixteen months at several entry-level jobs, as well as

twenty-three in-depth interviews with workers and innumerable hours of ethnographic observation in informal settings over three years, 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., socioeconomics, 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 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 Latina/o migrants’ experiences in the United States with collective definition. I seek to 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. Further, I refer to the more narrow specification of the dynamics of incorporation that pertains 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 that dominant groups, here white Americans, overdetermine. Yet encounters between such groups are ongoing, and the positions they occupy within a shifting and stratified system of belonging are necessarily emergent rather than resolved. The position of whiteness at the core of this system means that subordinated groups’ relations with one another are refracted through their relations with whites and whiteness. Expanding on what the critical race scholars Barbara Flagg (1993) and Ian Haney López (2006 [1996]) have termed the “transparency phenomenon,” intergroup relations among subordinated groups in a system structured around white dominance take on what I call 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, which in turn contributes to the broader incorporation process, that is, to the emergent “structures of feeling”¹ 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, 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 the majority of their waking hours, and it is the context through which different groups are most likely to encounter one another in structured and structuring ways. In the case of certain departments at this plant, such as Loin Boning, where I worked for nine months, workers spend a majority of the hours in their 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. In particular, 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 American South.

Contrary to the suggestion by some scholars that neighborhoods and public spaces such as Walmart are now the key sites for studying social relations involving Latinas/os, I argue emphatically that *work*—as 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 Latino/a migrants to view groups linked to value-laden categories such as blackness and whiteness in particular ways, it is their education and their experiences in American workplaces that fundamentally mold 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 volume, then, is not just an ethnography of a meat-packing plant, but an ethnography of the social relations—fundamentally conditioned by the social organization of labor—that shape the incorporation of Latino/a migrants.

The section that follows offers 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, it discusses the burgeoning agro-industrial development that depended on drawing an abundant supply of labor to areas that had previously known little of international migration. It explains the significance of the site I selected for studying the social and economic incorporation of Latina/o migrants, in particular through attention to their relationships with native-born non-Latina/o groups in the important social domain of work. The third section returns to the encounter that opens this chapter, elaborating on its significance for understanding social relations between Latinas/os and African Americans, the native-born group with whom they most overlap in the workplace. The fourth section gives readers a sense of the analytical framework that informs this study, and introduces the concept of prismatic engagement with which I propose to capture features of relations among subordinate groups encountering one another through the refractory lens of white dominance. The fifth section lays out the state of current research on Latino/a migrant incorporation in the U.S. South and relations between Latinas/os and native-born groups, pointing to strengths and limitations in this research that will be addressed 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/a migrants to the South (Massey, Durand, and Malone

2002; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005; Massey 2008; Hagan, Eschbach, and Rodríguez 2008). Although economic restructuring has devastated older industries in the South, notably textiles, new sources of economic investment have flocked to Southern states seeking 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, and Quingla 2011). Given these dramatic and ongoing transformations, researchers have had 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 agro-industrial concerns were looking to consolidate their market control and expand production in new peripheries that had traditionally been beyond the reach of organized labor (Gray 2014; 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 union-busting “right-to-work” laws that were the icing on the big-business-friendly cake, that decade 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 while other industries, such as textiles and furniture manufacturing, were on a steep decline. Yet if agro-industrial 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 of the sort it had a preference for: namely, the labor that was most exploitable.

Thus commenced in the hog processing industry what had already begun in the chicken, turkey, and hog farms and poultry processing industry up and down the Eastern seaboard and Sunbelt 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 African Americans and whites.² In the 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 the changes were the company’s 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 agro-industrial sector lured an early wave of Honduran men to the area in the early 1990s. As the twenty-first century began, Latino/a migrants had established themselves as the stable majority of the 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 wishing to reunite with spouses and family members whose planned temporary migrations had become increasingly permanent (Pastoral Social/Caritas 2003). Employment in the agro-industrial complex was abundant and easily attainable regardless of authorization status. But less than a decade later, dramatic shifts in the legal and 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 are 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 volume of scholarship on Latino/a migration and the New South, much of which addresses one of two issues. On 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 poses for communities unaccustomed to dealing with immigration, and for the well-being of new Latino/a 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 about the prospects for Latino/a 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; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005; Arreola 2004; Sills 2010; Hill and Beaver 1998; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995; Gozdziaik and Martin 2005; Hamamoto and Torres 1997; Jones 2008; Johnson-Webb 2003; Odem and Lacy 2009; Mantero 2008; Massey 2008; Murphy, Blanchard, and Hill 2001; Peacock, Watson, and Matthews 2005; Smith and Furuseth 2006; Gill 2010).

Recent research suggests that, while Latino/a migrants are “successfully” becoming a part of the Southern working class, African Americans facing a threat to their sense of group position resulting from socio-economic competition react with an exclusionary posture toward them. Latinas/os, 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 despite their differences from the American racial order concur in devaluing blackness, 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/non-Black racial divide in the United States (Marrow 2011; Marrow 2007). 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 Latinas/os 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, Lowe, and Quingla 2011; Chavez, Mouw, and Hagan; 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, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Leiter 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 to the fore features prominent to the social organization of labor responds to the call of labor scholars to renew a focus on the work process (Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 2005; Reskin, McBrier, and Kmec 1999) 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 Latinas/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 1979; Fantasia 1988; Leidner 1993; Fink 1998; Striffler 2005; De Genova 2005; McDermott 2006; López-Sanders 2009; Pachirat 2011).



FIGURE 1. Partial exterior view of Swine's from a parking lot.



FIGURE 2. Tobacco fields alongside the roads of Clark County.



FIGURE 3. Exterior view of turkey farm enclosures alongside the roads of Clark County.

SITUATING INCORPORATION: ENCOUNTERS ON THE LINE

The scene that opens this chapter introduced six individuals, some Latinas and some African Americans, with whom I worked 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 exclaimed with astonishment, "Oh, I gotta go there!" Realizing Linda's confusion—that she had misinterpreted 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 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 [pointing to Cristina and 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 conveys the kind of spontaneous interactions between Latina/o and African American workers laboring on the line and at tables that I observed over my sixteen months working at entry-level jobs at this meatpacking plant. That Friday morning, an unauthorized Honduran worker explained to African American coworkers through a combination of minimal English, pantomime, and basic math why people like her come to work in the United States. 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 solvable 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 unsituated 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 to examine their implications for the long-term incorporation of Latinas/os 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 fully characterize relations between Latinas/os 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 the hundreds of encounters, conversations, and comments to which I was privy.

Extrapolating a general conclusion about relations between Latinas/os and African Americans 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 faces. 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 at the factory, 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 coworker, and their unequal bargaining power with white male authority figures. Most importantly, it would ignore altogether the great sense of oppression felt by Latinas/os who perceive that they are the most exploited and powerless workers, and that African Americans are privileged 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. The sociologist Roger Waldinger's (1996) "ethnic succession model," which builds on Lester Thurow's (1975) queue model of labor markets and Stanley Lieberman'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 Latinas/os. Although con-

clusions about the extent to which Latino/a 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; Skaggs, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Leiter 2000; Rosenfield and Tienda 1999; Kandel and Parrado 2004; but see López-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. This volume builds 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 also 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 that 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.

Some scholars have approached the question of social relations between Latino/a 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 Herbert Blumer's (1958) "sense of group position" approach. Although Blumer's concept refers to the positional relationship between dominant and subordinate groups, and the mechanism that produces 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 inte-

grating the “group position” perspective 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 inter-group 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 the anthropologist Fredrik 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 Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) advances in these areas, Michelle Lamont (2000; 1999; [with Fournier] 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 Virág 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 their 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” (171).

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 (excluding others), and have 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 López 2006 [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 Muñoz 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 Latinas/os 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/a 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 2010; Hill and Beaver 1998; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995; Gozdzik and Martin 2005; Hamamoto and Torres 1997; Jones 2008; Johnson-Webb 2003; Odem and Lacy 2009; Murphy, Blanchard, and Hill 2001; Mantero 2008; Massey 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 portrait in broad strokes of small-town demographic and economic restructuring that highlights the significant contributions Latino/a migrants have made to the agro-industrial 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 destabilization 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 Latinas/os. The concern over potentially conflictive relations between Latinas/os 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 (Holzer 2011; United States Commission on Civil Rights 2010; Smith and 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 Latinas/os and African Americans (McDermott 2011; Marrow 2011; López-Sanders 2009; Gordon and Lenhardt 2007; but see Jones 2012). For example, Marrow (2011; 2007) interviewed more than a hundred Latino/a migrants and native-born whites and African Americans in two North Carolina counties, across a variety of industries and institutional arenas. She found that Latino/a migrants sense greater discrimination from African Americans than from 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 toward Latinas/os, a socioeconomic competition-based threat exacerbated in areas with higher African American population levels. 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/a migrants, and that Blacks are seen as its “worst perpetrators” (30). The anthropologists David Griffith (2005) and Steve Striffler (2005) report similar findings from their interviews with Latinas/os involved in poultry processing in Arkansas and North Carolina. To Marrow and others, these findings point to the role of African Americans in excluding Latinas/os, and “helping to speed up Hispanic newcomers’ incorporation into ‘mainstream’ rural Southern society as ‘nonblacks’” (2007, 30).

The problem with these studies 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 toward Latino/a migrants. From this perspective, "conflict" is expected to stem from the former's feelings about the competitive threat posed by the latter. But from an *incorporation* perspective, Latino/a migrants' understandings about African Americans take on equal significance, and these understandings are likely tied to how Latinas/os 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 relies almost exclusively on interview data, mostly with Latino/a migrants embedded in a variety of arenas. Although interview-based research conducted with Latinas/os may elicit information about the stereotypes or other sources for attitudes they have toward Blacks, such data is no substitute for observational data that captures unprompted and spontaneous encounters between Latinas/os and African Americans in crucial and delimited contexts such as 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 Latinas/os and African Americans in ways that foreshadow my argument (Stuesse and Helton 2013; Stuesse 2009).

Further, while such interview-based research yields rich data on the perceptions of Latinas/os across a broad range of social situations about whether they experience discrimination and to whom they attribute it, it is important to distinguish between a statement about Latinas/os' perceptions, whatever their actual experiences, and a statement about the fact of African Americans' role in essentially pushing Latinas/os to embrace a position closer to whites. After all, the built-in incentives Latinas/os have—and were likely well aware of before arriving—to distance themselves from Blacks and other highly stigmatized groups and 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/a 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, the opaque shadow of which looms over the whole system of racialized stratification (Haney López 2014; Lipsitz 2006 [1998]; De Genova 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; also Roediger 2005; Jacobson 1998; Brodtkin 1998). Although the basis of these struggles today may be different, and their eventual outcomes remain 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 Latinas/os are becoming.

Laboring alongside Latina/o and African American meatpacking workers and getting to know them outside the factory left me certain that understanding how these groups encounter one another, and assessing what the character of these encounters suggests about how Latinas/os 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 actions that are substantially inflected negatively toward African Americans. This reflects and reinforces ethnoracial boundaries between Latinas/os and African Americans, appears to represent Latinas/os' determination to achieve incorporation as non-Blacks, and may bolster the hegemony of whiteness in the emerging order. Yet the qualitative range within and across distinct modes of action—how Latinas/os and African Americans talk about and behave toward one another—reveals contradictions and disjunctures that complicate any sweeping generalization based on even 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. As Yanira, a young Dominican packer, put it, “If you work with one person so closely, constantly, daily, hour after hour, thirteen-hour after thirteen-hour, you’re going to get to be 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 2 addresses the broad social and economic contexts in which Latino/a migration to the American South has unfolded. It discusses the arrival stories of Latino/a migrants, focusing especially on the experiences of women and Central Americans, as both of those groups have received less attention than their male and Mexican counterparts. This chapter first delves into the social and economic contexts of origin communities that framed the migrants' decisions to leave. It then discusses the Latina/o migrants' labor market experiences in the United States that shaped their eventual insertion into the South's agro-industrial labor force. Following this, it examines 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. It argues 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 that these frameworks offer limited utility for studying relations between Latinas/os and African Americans in the workplace.

Chapter 3 delves into the racialized language of the shop floor. In particular it examines the symbolic boundaries Latina/o workers construct vis-à-vis their African American counterparts through such designations of the latter as *moyos*. It traces the origins and usages of the term, locating it in a transnational field of ethnoracial meanings that reflect as well as produce negative boundaries with African Americans.

Chapter 4 links the strong symbolic boundaries that Latinas/os 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 Latina/o workers' certainty that they are the most disadvantaged group at Swine's and that African Americans occupy a position of privilege. To explain my findings, I expand the concept of racial alienation by recognizing alternative sources of grievance that may motivate intergroup relations and that are context dependent, challenging scholars' preoccupation with job competition as the key source of intergroup conflict. By loosening the unnecessary analytic restrictions in the original formulation (Bobo and Hutchings 1996), racial alienation becomes a powerful part of the explanation for the social-relational dynamics at Swine's and for political configurations in the broader stratified system of belonging in the United States.

Chapter 5 delves in greater depth into the source of Latino/a workers' perception of themselves as the most oppressively exploited workers at Swine's. It argues 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. It further proposes 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."

Chapter 6 considers how the composition of the authority structure—African American, white, or Latino/a—mediates the dynamics observed and described in the preceding chapters. It analyzes the widespread perception among Latina/o workers that an African American-dominated authority structure magnifies the "privileged" position of African American workers.

Chapter 7 turns to an examination of African American workers' perspectives on Latinas/os 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 Latina/o counterparts. These findings are surprising given the conclusions put forth in recent research that relies on competition perspectives and interviews with (mostly) Latinas/os, namely that African Americans display more exclusionary attitudes and behavior toward Latinas/os in the South than do whites. In combination with an expanded construct of racial alienation, this chapter 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, in chapter 8, I summarize my findings 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. I also take up the policy implications of these findings, and propose a set of reforms that are urgently needed to improve the lives of all workers on—and off—the line.