

comprise a majority in the United States. In effect, the idea of what it means to be American is historically contingent.

Wong has done us a great service in producing research that aids us in looking beyond the present political moment. For some labor and industrial relations scholars, the provided examples, figures, and illustrations will not be enough to pick up the book. Yet, it needs to be kept in mind that he does not seek to explain migration and border policies through economic lenses. Consequently, labor, trade unions, and employers remain only a marginal concern. Nonetheless, he provides an analysis of how the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 created two categories of immigrants in the United States: skilled and temporary. This act would eventually lead to a system of work visas such as H-1B (temporary visa for highly skilled workers) and H-2A (agricultural workers). In doing so, he does set immigration policies into a labor context. Furthermore, he details how a workplace raid in Iowa and its economic, social, and political fallout refocused Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security's efforts on sanctioning employers (p. 75). Even with the limited material on labor, *The Politics of Immigration* opens new lines of enquiry for industrial relations scholars. For example, is the new demographic normal mirrored in trade unions, and how does it affect trade union policy? How does the distinction between legal admission policies, border security policies, interior immigration enforcement, and integration policies aid us to understand employers' and unions' approaches to immigration? Furthermore, what does the entrenchment and gridlock around immigration since 2005 mean for US business?

This book helps us to understand the future of immigration, the policy debates, and the national identity in the United States. This trend is especially prescient given that President Trump is still seeking to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) at time of writing. Wong forensically delves into the data and issues that are too complex for media soundbites. Thus, it is unlikely that *The Politics of Immigration* will gain wider media attention in the current debate. Yet, its empirical material and theoretical approach can equip scholars, researchers, and students with the analytical tools to understand the current impasse in the immigration debate and to identify the levers of political power needed for equitable and just change.

Mark Bergfeld  
PhD Researcher and Teaching Associate  
School of Business and Management  
Centre for Research in Equality and Diversity  
Queen Mary University of London

---

*Scratching Out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South.* By Angela Stuesse. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. 336 pp. ISBN 9780520287204, \$85 (Cloth); ISBN 9780520287211, \$29.95 (Paperback).

*On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South.* By Vanesa Ribas. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. 272 pp. ISBN 9780520282957, \$85 (Cloth); ISBN 9780520282964, \$29.95 (Paperback).

DOI: 10.1177/0019793918775715

Two texts, one by Angela Stuesse and the other by Vanesa Ribas, describe the racial tensions and moments of solidarity between African Americans and Latino migrants in the South. The authors examine the everyday challenges of meat processing workers by observing how migrants affect racial tensions. Although the authors draw different conclusions on the ways Latinos affect their respective communities, they nonetheless situate their findings within structures of racism that privilege whiteness and contribute in various ways to anti-blackness. Furthermore, Stuesse and Ribas raise compelling critiques of exploitative practices in the meat industry. Their research is attentive to the ways in which African American and Latino workers experience workplace conditions that cause injuries to their well-being and assaults on their dignity. They describe the commonplace exploitation of the industry, such as the refusal of medical treatment, injuries on the job, and a denial of what should be a basic right,

like bathroom breaks. Stuesse and Ribas demonstrate that industry practices are not isolated or rare violations by individual culprits, but rather consequences of structural processes designed to gain profits at the expense of workers.

Stuesse's book, *Scratching Out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South*, examines the complex racial landscape of a rural Mississippi community where Latino migrants are shifting a long-standing racial order. She provides an insightful critique of structural processes that contribute to global inequality, connecting neoliberal policies to the industry's flagrant labor violations, unsafe working conditions, and the state's immigration policies. This book links interactions between people from disparate experiences, social histories, and languages to an economic system that uses difference as a way to disrupt worker solidarity. Even with the challenges that arise as a result of neoliberal policies, however, Stuesse asks what can be learned from past struggles to effectively mobilize workers for more dignified working conditions moving forward.

*Scratching Out a Living* is a product of six years of extensive ethnographic fieldwork. Concerned with the inherent power contradictions of research, the author asks how her anthropological tools can advance more equitable conditions for poultry workers. Drawing from the scholarship of João Costa Vargas (*Catching Hell in the City of Angels: Life and Meanings of Blackness in South Central Los Angeles* 2006), her methodology consists of "observant participation," which formulates a new understanding of the traditional method of participant observation to instead "emphasize one's role as a participant in the processes under study" (p. 19). During her research, Stuesse collaborated with a local worker center. She was heavily invested in its growth and ultimately became an organizer, forging relationships with workers as well as community organizers. To accompany her observations, she conducted 60 interviews to include a range of perspectives from workers from different countries, racial groups, and roles within poultry plants.

The strength of Stuesse's work is documenting the rise of the region's poultry industry within the context of the area's deep racial problems. Stuesse describes the racial landscape in great detail, illustrating how white supremacy thrived and affected social relations in Mississippi. She outlines the region's racial projects that included the institution of slavery, white violence against African Americans, sharecropping, and segregation. From this perspective, her book contextualizes the role of structural racism in shaping labor policies and divisions in the workplace. Stuesse finds that widespread practices shaped by white supremacist ideologies relegated African Americans to exploitative and segregated labor conditions. This trend was evidenced by Stuesse's historical analysis that describes how poultry plants barred African American workers into the early 1960s. Then, once they achieved entry into the plants, they were paid less and treated worse than were their white coworkers. She goes on to argue that management used the emergence of African Americans in the plants as a way to pit workers against one another. Through her analysis of the region, she describes how the development of the poultry industry relied on racial inequality to intensify profits, maintain power relations, and increase the tensions between African American and white workers.

A focus of Stuesse's work is the discussion of structural forces such as neoliberalism that exacerbate inequality for working-class people. Stuesse highlights how racial structures and neoliberal policies produce new forms of workplace organization, labor control, and divisions of labor that open new possibilities for exploitation. She goes on to argue, "While some strategies reflect old plantation mentality approaches to labor control, neoliberalism heightens their effects and provides new opportunities for worker division and exploitation" (p. 22). She illuminates how poultry capitalists take advantage of neoliberal practices that argue for greater individualization and deregulation as methods to maximize capital accumulation and to create a vulnerable labor force. The poultry industry benefits from state policies such as Right to Work, along with the anti-union practices that contribute to the region's anti-labor history.

Readers will find the book's valuable organizing strategies helpful, a welcome contribution to studies that discuss the devastating impacts of neoliberalism on workers. Stuesse balances the impact of top-down policies with the struggles of collective organizing throughout her book. Although racial oppression and exploitation have occurred in the region, Stuesse argues that people have struggled collectively to combat white supremacist policies and undignified working conditions. At the worker center she observed moments of tension and mistrust converted to possibilities for solidarity through workshops and popular education classes. Of course, she also documents the challenges of organizing across race, language, and citizenship. *Scratching Out a Living* provides a well-researched model of how politically engaged scholarship can provide possibilities for a more equitable world.

Vanessa Ribas's *On the Line* explores the lives of African American and Latino workers in a meat processing plant in North Carolina. Using interviews and participant observation, this

ethnography situates the importance of the workplace to understand race relations. Ribas, who is of Puerto Rican descent, worked in the plant for 16 months alongside the people in her study. At the plant she develops strong relationships and observes how workers were routinely subject to grueling working conditions and dehumanizing treatment. Rich in detail, the study provides context to the ways in which racial groups make sense of other group's social location, perceived work ethic, and how they understand their struggles relationally in an exploitative workplace.

Ribas begins by contextualizing the plant's social organization with an overview of the rapid growth of industries in the region and the economic restructuring that increased production levels. The accelerated growth of meat processing plants and the desire to intensify capital accumulation transformed the hiring choices of employers to attain workers from Mexico and Central America, many without proper work authorization. Such transformations to the economic landscape brought demographic changes comprising a new Southern working class. The influx of Latino migrant workers, with a growing number from Central America, began to occupy jobs that were previously held by African American workers. With a new stream of labor pools, employers increasingly treated workers as replaceable and disposable.

Drawing on her observations at "Swine's" (a pseudonym for the plant), Ribas brings to life the Latino and African American workers in her study by balancing vivid descriptions of worker struggles and contextualizing her observations to a racially stratifying labor market that structures their everyday treatment. She includes the painful ways in which Latino migrant workers were humiliated, for example, wetting themselves during long shifts due to a lack of proper bathroom breaks. Many workers experience similar workplace abuses that shape their attitudes and contribute to tensions with other racial groups. She argues that Latino workers perceive themselves as the most exploited in the workplace because of their racialization and in turn come to resent African American workers because they perceive them as privileged. By contrast, African American workers who were also exploited at the plant did not direct their hostility toward their Latino coworkers.

Central to *On the Line* is the study of immigrant incorporation that focuses on the everyday instances of migrant life. For Ribas, the workplace is a critical site to understand intergroup interactions since it is where the working class spends the majority of their day. Much of her analytical framework is advancing the concept of prismatic engagement to understand intergroup relations. This concept argues that "intergroup relations—especially among subordinated groups—are mediated by the statuses and signifiers that dominant groups, here white Americans, overdetermine" (p. 8). Viewing intergroup relations in this way, Ribas takes into account a larger racial system that creates unequal relations among groups. She presents an extended view of the racial divisions of labor and authority structure in the plant. She includes the country's racial regimes, which encompass anti-immigrant sentiments, the devaluation of African American workers, and a power structure in which white people hold key positions.

Another key argument is Ribas's expansion of the concept of "racial alienation" first introduced by Lawrence Bobo and Vincent L. Hutchings ("Perceptions of Racial Group Competition," *American Sociological Review* 1996), which attempts to understand how a member of a subordinated group feels disenfranchised. According to the concept, the more racial subordination a group member experiences, the greater sense of racial alienation will ensue. During this process, an increased perception of racial oppression will produce resentment and concerns about competition for jobs with other groups. Ribas highlights how scholars in the past have argued that native-born groups such as African Americans may feel greater "racial alienation" and will perceive migrants to be the greatest source of competition for jobs.

Ribas expands the concept by critiquing its narrow focus on the African American experience. She demonstrates how Latino migrant workers at the processing plant are an example of how they perceive themselves as the most racially subordinate and thus experience the greatest sense of "racial alienation." Ribas indicates that Latino migrants perceive themselves as the most exploited because of their racialization and location within the hierarchy of jobs at the plant. They believe African Americans to be privileged because they hold supervisor positions and possess citizenship. Her analysis focuses on factors that move beyond competition for resources as the culprit for intergroup tensions by illustrating how Latino workers feel they are the most mistreated by management. However, Ribas goes on to argue that these perceptions by Latinos of African American workers are imbued with racially coded messages of anti-blackness.

Scholars will find helpful the book's focus on gender that discusses Central American women in the workplace, a group who have tended to receive less attention in labor studies.

Readers of *On the Line* will find a book that moves beyond a simplistic portrait of race relations between African Americans and Latinos. Instead, it offers a nuanced depiction of the ways in which racial groups experience moments of tension and frustration, but who at times can find pleasant interactions in difficult circumstances. Past scholars who have discussed relations between these two racial groups have tended to display romanticized notions of group solidarity or present a simplistic characterization of only hostile dynamics—this book does neither.

Both texts share the sentiment that a white power structure facilitates the mistrust among black and brown workers. While Ribas's *On the Line* and Stuesse's *Scratching Out a Living* view whiteness at the top of the racial hierarchy, they diverge (yet in some aspects share analysis) on the issue of where Latinos are situated within the region's racial regimes. Since Ribas conducts the majority of her research at the plant, she emphasizes the workplace to understand racial hierarchies. Ribas argues that within the realm of the workplace, "shifting preferences of employers for Latina/o migrant workers positions 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 they were hired" (p. 188).

Stuesse examines the ways in which Latinos enter existing racial tensions and further entrench racialized ideologies. In her research, the workplace is significant, yet she also extends her analysis to social relations in the community. According to Stuesse, the entrance of migrants means that "rather than reconfiguring the area's rigid social hierarchies of race, immigrants' arrival is largely reinforcing a system in which whiteness maintains its privilege and Blackness persists at the very bottom" (p. 95). She further illustrates how many whites prefer new immigrants because of a racialized perception that unlike African Americans, Latino migrants exhibit a "good" work ethic. Consequently, Stuesse argues, Latinos are creating a "third space" in the racial hierarchy. This space is not at the bottom but somewhere in between black and white. The third space is contextual, and she acknowledges the workplace as a location where this argument is complicated. Both authors, however, agree that Latinos participate in forms of anti-blackness. In addition, both authors have divergent perspectives on whether Latinos quickly learn anti-black attitudes in the United States or how much of their attitudes are informed by ideologies from their home countries.

When read together, these texts offer complementary perspectives from which to assess intergroup relations in meat processing plants. They provide a view of the working class as filled with contradictions and tensions, yet highlight moments of desire to improve working conditions for everyone. From Stuesse's perspective, there is an overarching question of how to address mistrust and transform workplace hostility into organizing potential. Readers will benefit from her structural analysis of neoliberal policies and her useful scrutiny of "labor shortage discourse" that calls into question anti-black frameworks. Ribas's *On the Line* deepens our understanding of shop floor dynamics and is able to provide connections between what people describe in interviews and their actions in the workplace. In tandem, these books contribute greatly to labor studies concerning intergroup relations by offering a view of exploitation from below.

Eric Arce  
PhD Candidate  
UCSB Department of Sociology

---

*Living on the Margins: Undocumented Migrants in a Global City.* By Alice Bloch and Sonia McKay. Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2017. 224 pp. ISBN 9781447319375, \$42.95 (Paperback); 2016, 256 pp. ISBN 9781447319368, \$99.00 (Cloth).

DOI: 10.1177/0019793918775716

*Living on the Margins* by Alice Bloch and Sonia McKay deals with undocumented migrants from Turkey/Kurdistan, China, and Bangladesh working in "ethnic enclaves" in the Greater London area. The authors have chosen a holistic approach, which includes research on the migrants' legal circumstances, their reasons to migrate, the routes they took, their