

# **ENFORCING BORDERS IN THE NUEVO SOUTH**

## ***Gender and Migration in Williamsburg, Virginia, and the Research Triangle, North Carolina***

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*Drawing from ethnographic research in the Research Triangle of North Carolina and Williamsburg, Virginia, the authors build on Anzaldúa's conceptualization of "borderlands" to analyze how borders of social membership are constructed and enforced in "el Nuevo South." Our gender analysis reveals that intersecting structural conditions—the labor market, the organization of public space, and the institutional organization of health care and other public services—combine with gendered processes in the home and family to regulate women's participation in community life. Enforcers of borders include institutional actors, mostly women, in social services and clinics who occupy institutional locations that enable them to define who is entitled to public goods and to categorize migrants as undeserving "others." We reveal how a particularly configured matrix of domination transcends the spheres of home, work, and community to constrain women migrants' physical and economic mobility and personal autonomy and to inhibit their participation in their societies of reception.*

**Keywords:** *gender; migration; borderlands; other construction; social boundaries; citizenship*

The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands, and spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.

—Gloria Anzaldúa (1987)

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In the United States, recent patterns of migration from Latin American countries to cities, rural areas, small towns, and developing suburbs in states like Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Virginia (Smith and Furuseth 2006; Pew Hispanic Center 2005) have given rise to shifts in cultural understandings of community belonging. The result has been “a new South emerging from the old—a multicultural, transnational dominion in what was once the United States’s preeminently biracial landscape” (Drever 2006, 19). Drawing from several years of independently conducted, ethnographic research in two locations in the “Nuevo New South” (Fink 2003; Mohl 2003)—Williamsburg, Virginia, and the Research Triangle, North Carolina—we employ a gender lens to analyze the ways in which intersecting structural conditions—the labor market, the organization of public space, and the institutional organization of health care and other public services—shape processes of inclusion and institutional mechanisms of exclusion within these two localities. We build on Anzaldúa’s (1987) conceptualization of borderlands to illuminate how within this structural framework, social and institutional actors construct and maintain boundaries of social membership. Much like the literal Mexican-U.S. border, these boundaries separate, marginalize, and create conflict (Alvarez 1995, 451).

We contribute to understanding the structural dimensions of other construction in these new borderlands of the U.S. South that facilitate the exercise of power by groups—in some cases groups of “native”-born actors who themselves occupy disadvantaged social locations—to define the parameters of social belonging (Schwalbe et al 2000, 422-30). Deeply

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implicated in these processes that preserve social boundaries and inequalities are intersecting structures of difference. Our primary focus here is on gender and race. In Williamsburg and the Research Triangle, structural factors that enable the maintenance of social boundaries (border enforcement) include the organization of public space, locally enforced government reception policies, incipient or weak migrant networks, and working conditions in entry-level service-sector jobs. While structural conditions facilitate the construction of racialized otherness, they also affect men and women in different ways. For example, by intersecting with gender relations in the home, they exacerbate Latina migrants' social and geographical isolation and dependency. What emerges from our comparative analysis is a picture of how a particularly configured matrix of domination (Collins [1990] 2000) transcends the spheres of home, work, and community to constrain women migrants' physical and economic mobility and personal autonomy and inhibit their participation in their societies of reception.

Nonetheless, as in the case of other localities (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Zentgraf 2002), migrant women in Williamsburg and the Research Triangle do play important roles as community actors, for example, when they represent the family in interactions with institutions that administer public services. It is through this visible, public role in community life, as caretakers of the family, that women's participation is most regulated. In their daily interactions with migrants, actors charged with administering social services and public benefits—health care staff, social workers, and receptionists at clinics and agencies—occupy institutional locations that enable them to define who is entitled to public goods. In doing so, they often rely on racial and cultural cues to categorize migrants as undeserving “others.”

After a brief discussion of the relevant literature on the topic of other construction and bordering, we discuss our research methods. We then present background information about the political and economic context of the receiving sites of Williamsburg, Virginia, and the Research Triangle, North Carolina, and turn to the key findings that link processes of other construction in these two sites in the Nuevo South.

## **GENDERED MIGRATION AND OTHER CONSTRUCTION IN THE BORDERLANDS**

As in other receiving contexts, institutions in Williamsburg and the Research Triangle recognize migrants as laborers, consumers, patients, and clients of social services. Their racialization as others, often reflected

in their legal nonexistence as undocumented immigrants, renders them partial or informal citizens (Sassen 2006, 294-96), limits their participation in community life, and leaves them vulnerable to deportation, confinement to low-wage jobs, and hindered access to decent housing, education, food, and health care (Coutin 2000).

Our use of “migrant” to designate newcomers of Latin American origin<sup>1</sup> reflects our conceptualization of Latinos/Latinas in these recent immigration destinations as *fronterizos/fronterizas* who straddle different cultures, are embedded in more than one society, and for whom families and communities transcend geographical place (De Genova 2005, 3). The term “migrant” suggests a standpoint that is broader than that of the U.S. nation-state as well as sense of movement that goes beyond unidirectional geographical border crossing. In Williamsburg, Virginia, and the Research Triangle, North Carolina, this category encapsulates a remarkable heterogeneity of experiences, migration histories, and conditions, ranging from temporary, seasonal migration to longer-term settlement and from undocumented immigration status to U.S. citizenship.

Likewise, our research sites encompass contested spaces of everyday life characterized by in-betweenness and instability—sites of boundary making and fragmentation but also resistance and continual reconstruction (Rosaldo 1993; Anzaldúa 1987; cf. Lugo 1997). Thus, conceptualizing these localities in the U.S. South as “newly emerging borderlands” illuminates the construction and policing of the boundaries between “us” and “them” in these communities. Our use of these theoretical concepts also suggests incompleteness, as the social processes involved in migration are constructed through human interaction at multiple, contested borders that cross-cut the intersecting domains of home, the community, and the workplace (De Genova 2005, 2-3; Alvarez 1995, 449, 451).

Recent research has increasingly devoted attention to the ways gender shapes the conditions, opportunities, and experiences of migration (Menjívar 2003, 106; Hirsch 2003; Kibria 1993) and how migratory processes, in turn, both reproduce gender relations and push them along new trajectories (Brennan 2004, 705-33; Mahler and Pessar 2006; Mahler 1999). For example, studies in urban receiving settings such as gateway cities in Southern California (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Zentgraf 2002, 629-30) and Sunbelt cities like Atlanta, Georgia (Hirsch 2003, 1999), have highlighted the role that women play in making settlement happen through their community involvement. This research also demonstrates that engaging in public-sphere activities, many of which involve gaining access to previously masculine privileges, such as driving a car and participating in the paid labor force, can

enhance women's empowerment and autonomy. However, scholars have also recognized the importance of the particular constellations of actors and structural conditions, including the political context, labor market conditions, and spatial organization, in local receiving contexts for shaping gendered experiences of migrants (Mahler 1999; Menjívar 2003, 102-103).

We argue that migrant women's interactions with the administrators of social services and entitlements represent a key site for the construction and enforcement of social membership. Social workers, health care providers, and other administrators of social benefits (such as staff members at the Department of Motor Vehicles) daily implement, interpret, and apply increasingly restrictive immigration policies and eligibility requirements. Thus, enforcement of the multiple borders in these communities is not only carried out by *la migrá*,<sup>2</sup> the court system, and police. In their capacity as gatekeepers, these institutional actors, most of whom are women, make use of policies and eligibility requirements to construct otherness.

Despite our focus on the structural and institutional mechanisms of other construction and exclusion, we recognize migrants as agents who do not passively accept the conditions of their marginalization (Castañeda and Zavella 2007; Hardy-Fanta 1993, 1997; Hirsch 1999). Borderlands are also sites of resistance, and migrants in the communities we study actively appropriate, accommodate, and resist these structures (Calderón and Saldívar 1991, 4). Thus, we do not wish to discount the cases of migrants who develop survival strategies that include accessing health care through the use of alternative health practices (Espin 1995; Peña and Frehill 1998, 621), pooling childcare, leaving abusive partners, or seeking out social services and benefits for themselves and their children. Our substantive point is that the particular structural conditions in these local contexts—shaped by gender and race—as well as the institutional policing of the borders of social membership greatly curtail and impinge on migrants' efforts to carve out spaces for self-definition that challenge their categorization as "other" (Peña and Frehill 1998, 620; Mahler 1999, 709).

## METHOD

Scholars have highlighted the need for more comparative work to advance understandings of gender and migration, and our analysis represents a response to the call to move beyond the single, ethnographic case study (Mahler and Pessar 2006, 32). We draw from separately conducted and independently designed ethnographic research projects with Latino/Latina migrants and their families in Williamsburg, Virginia, and the Research Triangle, North Carolina, and bring our data together within a comparative

framework to delineate commonalities in the ways that gendered and racialized other construction occurs in sites of recent immigration reception.

Natalia's research in North Carolina consisted of two years (May 2002 through July 2004) of qualitative research with Latina migrants in the Triangle Area, including 20 months in which she engaged in participant observation at Care Inc., a private community clinic that provides comprehensive care and education to racially and ethnically diverse clients.<sup>3</sup> While working as a volunteer translator, she observed and interacted with staff in four of the clinic's six units and conducted interviews with 21 clinic employees and health care workers, including receptionists, administrative staff, and health care providers such as triage nurses, laboratory clinicians, and physicians. Through her participation in the everyday routines and activities of the clinic, she took part in countless informal conversations recorded in her field notes.

Since 2003, Jennifer has conducted ethnographic research with recent Mexican and Central American migrants and their families in Williamsburg, where she has lived for nearly a decade. The larger project from which these findings are drawn combines global political-economic analysis and multi-sited ethnographic research with collaborative, community-based methods. In addition to extensive participant observation, between 2003 and 2006, she and her research assistants conducted semistructured, in-depth interviews with 14 Mexican and Central American immigrants who had arrived in Williamsburg in the past 10 years. Interviews queried participants regarding their experiences accessing social services, their impressions of life in Williamsburg compared to their home countries, and their perspectives regarding their participation in community life. In addition, she conducted six formal, semistructured interviews with family members in migrants' home communities on two separate trips to Mexico and numerous informal interviews with nongovernmental organization practitioners, community leaders, and migrants and their families and friends.

In the tradition of public sociology (cf. Clawson et al. 2007), our two larger projects are grounded in politically engaged research in alignment with Latina/Latino migrant communities, emerging out of our relationships with migrants and other community groups as well as a feminist, political vision of research as a vehicle for "meaningfully engag[ing] the world and collectively act[ing] within it . . . in order to name the world and transform it" (De Genova 2005, 25). Advocacy work with migrants was a core component of the research design of our studies. We acted as interpreters as migrants navigated the health care, social service, and local school systems; connected them with English as a second language resources, counseling services, or legal assistance; and supported them as they negotiated with

insurance companies, banks, and officials at the local courts and in interactions with law enforcement. Each of us also engaged in extensive collaborations with local community organizations, such as immigrant rights groups and organizations seeking to address the needs of migrants, and we each established support groups for Latina mothers.

As feminist researchers, we recognize how our social locations have shaped our work as well as our access to the worlds of our “respondents” (Hartsock 1998). Natalia is a light-skinned Colombian woman from Bogotá who was a graduate student at the time of this research. A professor at a liberal arts college, Jennifer is white with Mediterranean features, is fluent in Spanish, and has studied and traveled in Latin America extensively. She is also the mother of two young children whose father is Nicaraguan. Our cultural affinities with Latina/Latino migrants (and in Natalia’s case, her nationality), knowledge of Spanish, and gender (and in Jennifer’s case, her motherhood) facilitated the development of rapport with the women whose lives we examine—particularly in the context of our two research sites where there was (and is) a great paucity of services, programs, interpretative assistance, and other forms of support for these newcomers. Thus, our positionalities and roles as advocates allowed us to establish contacts and relationships with migrants that transcended (at least to some degree) differences (borders) of class, nationality, ethnicity/race, and immigration status.

Our shared methodological approaches combined with our experiences as ethnographers and advocates led us to identify a set of common themes that became the basis for a comparative framework that allowed us to draw connections across case studies. These themes included the intersecting social spaces within which migrant women in el Nuevo South are marginalized as others and the dynamics of social exclusion that occur within them, migrants’ interactions with various social and institutional actors who enforce social boundaries by enacting othering, and migrants’ experiences of marginalization and strategies for resistance. We then selected ethnographic narratives, direct quotations, and migrants’ words and voices from our field notes and interviews that elucidate and typify these themes. Our comparative analysis highlights the importance of situating processes of exclusion and inclusion within the particular structural and institutional settings of the context of reception (Menjívar 2003, 102-103) but also illustrates parallels in how institutional actors, “native” community members, and migrants in new borderlands construct and reconstruct their social worlds in efforts to define identities and community membership.



## A TALE OF TWO TRIANGLES: BORDERING IN THE NUEVO SOUTH

The regulation of borders of community belonging in the Williamsburg area (often referred to as the Historic Triangle of Jamestown, Upper York County, and Williamsburg, Virginia) and the Research Triangle of North Carolina occurs within a broader, national context of public debates about the immigration issue. These debates form the discursive underpinnings of institutional mechanisms of exclusion. Such narratives also reveal the interplay of race and gender built into a ready-made interpretative framework in which U.S. natives understand Latino/Latina immigration. Nationally circulating discourses propagate racial images of Latino/Latina migrants as the Brown Peril—a massive invasion that both endangers a singular American cultural identity and threatens to overrun schools and social services, increase crime rates, and even promote terrorism (Chavez 2001, 212; Santa Ana 2002). Despite studies that have shown Latina/Latino migrants' economic contributions through purchases, taxes, and labor to surpass their estimated cost to the state budgets, discourses about immigrants taking away jobs and as undeserving of public resources continue to shape local public debates about the immigration issue (Kasarda and Johnson 2006). The criminalization of migrants as illegals draws on racial categorizations and fuels the perception such as that articulated by an anonymous, but fairly typical, contributor to the Williamsburg local newspaper, who wrote that immigrants are not entitled to any services or privileges of this country, “except a one-way trip back to where they came from” (Anonymous 2007).

Racial discourses of migrants as threats also take on gender-specific characterizations. Latino migrants are characterized as dangerous criminals who steal jobs from U.S. citizens (Hemming, Rouverol, and Hornsby 2001), while Latinas are defined as sexually irresponsible and a drain on public resources (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1996). For example, at a community clinic in the Research Triangle, staff members and some patients frequently labeled Latina migrants as undeserving of subsidized health care because they “wor[k] the system,” “get pregnant . . . for citizenship,” and “breed like bunnies.”

### **The Williamsburg Area**

The Historic Triangle of Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown draws an estimated 4 million visitors every year. History buffs flock to such attractions as Colonial Williamsburg, a combination living museum



and historic theme park of restored sixteenth-century buildings, while families head to Busch Gardens and Water Country, popular amusement parks (Mink 2001). Like other areas in the U.S. South, greater Williamsburg has recently undergone considerable population growth and commercial and residential development, transforming from a rural tourist town to a quasi-suburb without a city. Stimulated by its attractive housing market and picturesque, historic surroundings, the area has become a popular retirement destination. In the process, its tourist-driven, service economy with a prominent hotel and restaurant sector has expanded to include landscaping and groundskeeping in gated communities, golf courses, and retirement communities. The plentiful low-wage jobs in these industries have acted as an important pull factor for migration from Mexico and Central America.

Williamsburg's particular pattern of development and organization of public space is geared to attracting one group—mostly white, wealthy retirees and professionals—while displacing others. Latina/Latino migrants are welcomed primarily as laborers, and the long-standing African American community has been increasingly pushed out due to soaring housing prices, rezoning, and rapid commercial development. Most working-class people and people of color reside in pockets of low-income housing—dispersed apartment complexes and trailer parks. Travel to and from these residential areas is made more difficult due to sporadic public transportation and few pedestrian walkways.

Latin American immigration to the Williamsburg area began in the 1990s, with growth rates of approximately 110 percent of its nonwhite Hispanic population between 1990 and 2000. Although the percentage of the population remains by official accounts fairly small—approximately 2.3 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2003)—perhaps a more reliable indicator of this demographic shift is demonstrated in the reports of dramatic increases in Latinos/Latinas' receiving social services and health care. For example, a local community clinic reported an increase of more than 70 percent of Latino/Latina patients between 2005 and 2006, with Latinos/Latinas making up nearly 15 percent of patients in 2006.

### **The Research Triangle of North Carolina**

Chapel Hill, Durham, and the state capital of Raleigh make up the Research Triangle of North Carolina. Chapel Hill is the home of the University of North Carolina and prides itself on being North Carolina's most highly educated city, with 73.7 percent of adults possessing a baccalaureate degree or higher (U.S. North Carolina Census Data 2000).

Chapel Hill has tended to be politically liberal amid the conservative South, electing the first African American mayor in the South, Howard Lee, in 1969. Beginning in the 1990s, North Carolina's Latina/Latino population grew by almost 400 percent, contributing more than \$9 billion to North Carolina's economy and filling one in three new jobs created between 1995 and 2005 (Kasarda and Johnson 2006). Composed largely of foreign-born noncitizens with a large proportion of recent migrants from Mexico (Silberman et al. 2003), this group quickly became a mainstay of the agricultural workforce with significant concentrations in the construction industry (29 percent of the labor force) (Kasarda and Johnson 2006) as well as in operative, laborer, and service jobs in such industries as meat processing, textile production, and furniture making (Skaggs, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Leiter 2000; Acury et al. 1999). Latina migrants are concentrated in the service sector where they work as housecleaners, nannies, cooks, and custodians (Karjanen 2008).

As immigration increased, anti-Latina/Latino sentiment grew substantially among both Black and white North Carolinians (Hemming, Rouverol, and Hornsby 2001; Hyde and Leiter 2000). The extraordinary arrival of Latina/Latino migrants to formerly Black neighborhoods has given rise to Black/Brown racial tensions as these groups compete for limited resources (Hemming, Rouverol, and Hornsby 2001). Despite the perception among North Carolinians, in particular among African Americans, that migrants are taking away "our" (very limited) social and medical services, Latina/Latino migrants' important economic contributions through purchases, taxes, and labor surpass their estimated cost to the state budget (Kasarda and Johnson 2006).

### **OTHERING AND ENFORCEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY AND STREETS OF NEW BORDERLANDS**

In Williamsburg and the Research Triangle, the dispersed organization of public space impedes the expansion of migrant networks that could foster migrants' social, economic, and physical mobility. There are few public spaces where Latinas/Latinos can gather to socialize, network, and exchange information—a situation exacerbated by limited and isolated low-income housing as well as by post-9/11 legislation requiring proof of legal, permanent residency to secure a driver's license. In addition, the relatively recent arrival of Latino/Latina migrants to these destinations and their frequent undocumented immigration status contributes to the nascent and underdeveloped state of migrants' community networks, as migrant-owned

businesses and churches that cater to Latinos/Latinas are scattered and relatively few in number (Hagan 1998; Portes and Zhou 1992).

Migrants experience the spatial and political conditions in these new borderlands in gender-specific ways. Women's restricted physical mobility inhibits Latinas' ability to participate in public life, find better jobs, and access resources in the community that might increase their economic mobility—such as day care and English classes. Borrowing from a popular *corrido* (a narrative song common in Mexico and in the Southwest in which the singer salutes, tells a story, and ends with a moral and farewell), Alicia characterized her life in Williamsburg as resembling a golden cage: “Here we have earnings and money, but there is no freedom. My son can't walk around or play outside here like in Mexico. Here the rules are different. . . . [In response to Jennifer's thanks for granting time for the interview] Of course we are home, where else are we going to go on our days off?” Experiences of these migrant women contrast with the cases of women migrants in urban, gateway sites, who have been shown to seek out services available in the new society (Chavira 1988; Kibria 1993), develop and use social networks for the benefit of themselves and their families (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjivar 2000), and aid in community development (O'Connor 1990).

For migrant women, undocumented immigration status brings with it vulnerability, fear, and insecurity that begin with the journey from their communities of origin. After facing the multiple dangers of crossing the geographic border, recently arrived female migrants in our research sites are vulnerable to exploitation by men in their lives and even violence at the hands of guides or sponsoring family members or male acquaintances who pay the cost of their transit and with whom they reside until they find jobs and housing. For example, Rosalba, a Salvadoran woman in her early twenties from the Santa Ana region of El Salvador, and Estrella, a young mother of two from Oaxaca, Mexico, arrived in Williamsburg in the mid-2000s, and their experiences typify those of many women from our research. They arrived with nothing more than the clothes they wore with no other option than to live with the guide who had arranged for their crossing the border and travel to Williamsburg. The scattered networks of family members who had migrated before them and the isolation of the apartment complex where they were housed meant that they had limited contact with anyone else who spoke Spanish. Both were sexually harassed by the men with whom they shared temporary households.

Police and immigration officers embody the fear and insecurity that undocumented immigrants experience, and most migrant women in our

research sites knew someone who had been deported. Although raids of job sites do sometimes occur in our research sites, detentions are more common for migrants as they travel to or from work. Routine traffic violations can result in deportations as increasingly, local courts and law enforcement have been granted or have taken on the authority to enforce immigration laws. Fear of deportation impinges on migrant women's physical mobility, which is already compromised by their dependence on men for transportation and their caretaking of children that often leaves them isolated in the home. In the Research Triangle, women migrants fear going out to the food pantry, *la pulga* (the flea market), or the Parent-Teacher Association thrift shop. The experiences of these women resonate with those who land in more rural areas of other parts of the country (Stephen 2007, 178-208, 231-73).

Since men are more likely to drive and their work in construction and landscaping takes them through publicly visible, regulated spaces more frequently, they run greater risks of being detained by police and possibly deported. For example, during an interview with Natalia, Doña Milagros recounted this story of a Latino migrant and father of two: "He was driving and the policeman gave him a traffic ticket. He went to court to pay the ticket. He told his wife that after going to court he was going to work, and they would see each other that night. When he went to pay the traffic ticket the judge issued a deportation order. I do not understand why the judge did that. This is new! And the wife did not know anything about her husband. She cried as she imagined him wounded or dead. . . . He called her after about three or five days, once he had arrived to Mexico. And the wife does not know how she is going to pay bills and how she is going to feed her children." Thus, women also express anxiety about their sons and partners, a fear that is compounded by mothers' frequent economic dependency on males due to the lack of affordable day care. A woman residing in North Carolina described her sense of insecurity: "You never know if they are going to be caught while driving to work or while they are working! I tell them to watch out for any strange men, as they might be *migra!* I relax only when all my sons are at home. . . . And it is not only us who are scared; no one stands outside the pantry waiting for a job. It is too risky."

Those women who do engage in waged employment often work in backstage jobs as dishwashers in restaurants or housekeeping staff in hotels and are thus much more hidden from public view. After a rash of police detentions of Latino/Latina migrants suspected of being "illegals," a member of a Williamsburg support group for migrant mothers mused, "I'm not worried about myself. I just walk to work and back. But what do we do when the men don't come home?"

At the same time, fear of deportation makes women wary of reporting crimes to law enforcement, particularly domestic violence.<sup>4</sup> In the summer of 2006, after the massive mobilization of immigrants in cities across the United States to protest proposed immigration legislation, fear and insecurity in the migrant community in Williamsburg was heightened by a series of detentions of undocumented immigrants. At one of its monthly meetings, the Williamsburg support group for migrant parents was abuzz as women exchanged information and expressed anxiety about what they would do if they or their partners were apprehended. One mother told of a case she had heard of in which the woman had called to report her husband for domestic violence. This resulted in his arrest and possible deportation, leaving the mother with no economic support or transportation. "It would have been better to have never called," said one parent. "Yes," nodded another mother in agreement, "Better to keep quiet even if he hits you, so as not to get into trouble."

Finally, women migrants relate the terror that they experience that their deportation will separate them from their U.S.-born children. Indeed, a recent spate of immigration raids has been reported in the national press in which the children of immigrants were left with no one to care for them when their mothers were detained. In a well-publicized case in Massachusetts, a breast-feeding baby was hospitalized for dehydration when his parents did not come home and a seven-year-old called a social services hotline (Shulman 2007). As De Genova (2002, 427) notes, deportability brings a forced orientation to the present. Migrant mothers must balance plans for their children—who represent the future—with the uncertainties and insecurities that their deportability presents.

### **BORDER ENFORCEMENT IN CLINICS AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

Men's and women's different experiences of illegality demonstrate that policing and regulation of migrants' movements enforce boundaries of social inclusion in gender-specific ways. Men's greater physical mobility puts them at greater risk than women for police detention and hence deportation. However, when women seek to access medical care and social and educational services for their children and themselves, these activities bring them face to face with institutional actors who police their access to social entitlements and public resources.<sup>5</sup>

The staff (mostly women) at community clinics, domestic violence shelters, foods banks, and other social services define and maintain the

borders of social membership in these new receiving sites. We do not wish to discount the efforts of many dedicated health care and social workers in these two sites who strive to connect migrants and their families with as many resources and services as possible, nor do we argue that these exclusions of migrants occur primarily due to individually held, racist beliefs. Rather, our interest lies in the institutional mechanisms that contribute to the marginalization of migrants and the role that these gatekeepers play—by virtue of their institutional positioning—in the enforcement of borders of social inclusion.

In clinics, receptionists and nurses exercise considerable power over patients' access to health care providers. At Care Inc. in the Research Triangle, the African American female triage nurse saw all patients who came without an appointment and exercised decision-making power in selecting who could be seen that day. She commented to Natalia that the Latina/Latino patients "work the system" and at times seek "unnecessary medical care for their children." She often complained about Latinas' refusal to learn English, commenting, "Natalia, . . . it is a two-way thing. I have learned Spanish, well, a little; why don't they learn English? They have children who speak English, they have been here for years, but they don't learn English." On many occasions, the female receptionists in clinics in our research sites told Latina/Latino patients to call later or insisted that they bring their own interpreter to see a doctor.<sup>6</sup> Migrants like Alicia, a Mexican woman living in Williamsburg, missed appointments for their children when receptionists left messages on their answering machines in English to reschedule appointments. In North Carolina, Natalia observed many times the African American female receptionists telling a Latina/Latino patient to call later because she did not speak Spanish. If time elapsed before Latina/Latino clients called back, then they were often told that there were no more appointments available for that month.

In 2003, the very spatial organization of the social services building in Williamsburg exuded a message of inaccessibility. The first thing that one encountered was a security officer in full uniform who asked those who entered to sign in with name, phone number, and the reason for the visit. None of the officers spoke Spanish, and there were (at that time) no signs in Spanish indicating where one should proceed to wait for social service visits or appointments at the community clinic.

Once Jennifer arrived at a Williamsburg clinic to find Hilda, a young migrant mother, had been waiting for more than an hour for her daughter's well-baby check-up and her own appointment to have an IUD (intrauterine device) inserted. When Jennifer inquired about Hilda's appointment, the woman receptionist answered, "That's why I made that sign." She

pointed to the sign in English that read, “Patients must check in with the Community Clinic receptionist.” “If they don’t check in with me, I can’t let the nurse know that they are here!” “But I signed in when I came in the building,” exclaimed Hilda, bewildered. Because Hilda was late to her appointment, she was not able to have a consultation with the doctor, and the nurse practitioner could not insert the IUD. As a result, she had to ask for additional time off work, find a ride, and come back another day with cash in hand to pay for the procedure.

In a similar instance, after a Latina mother left with her three sons, an African American woman triage nurse at the community clinic in North Carolina commented to Natalia, “I can’t let them see a doctor if they are not willing to tell me what is wrong with them. They don’t want to see me, just the doctor. . . . But they have to see me since it is my job to decide if they can get in or not. So like it or not, they have to deal with me. And the way to get to see a doctor is to be nice to me” (field notes).

When Jennifer accompanied a migrant woman who had been referred by her caseworker to a local domestic violence shelter and food bank, the volunteer in charge of intake and dispensing the donated food items—a white woman in her mid-sixties—bristled when Estrella, seven months pregnant at the time, could not provide a social security number. “Well, I have to call someone,” she said. “This has never happened before! She could be rich for all we know!” After taking down Estrella’s name and address and repeatedly asking her for whom the clothes and food were designated, the volunteer finally let Estrella pass into the food and clothing bank. But since the baby items were not specified on the referral form from the domestic violence agency, she would not permit Estrella to take home baby formula: “Nothing for the unborn child,” she said. “She can have clothes and food for herself and her sister, but she’s not allowed any food for that baby.”

At a community clinic in Williamsburg, nurses were also in charge of collecting payments for medical care from patients and verifying eligibility for the clinic’s sliding fee scale. In the early 2000s, proof of residency in the area did not have to be in the form of state-issued identification. But after changes to Medicaid eligibility verification requirements, the clinic began to require state-issued identification and proof of legal residency to be eligible for the sliding scale. The institutional positions of gatekeepers in social services and clinics placed these workers, mostly women, in the role of border enforcers. Sociocultural markers such as race and language skills as well as institutional ones such as social security numbers and state-issued forms of identification, become badges of social inclusion and entitlements to public goods.



## BORDERS AT THE FRONT DOOR AND AT WORK

In the particular spatial and political context of Williamsburg and the Research Triangle, structural conditions contribute to the isolation of migrant women, increasing their dependency on men in their families as well as their vulnerability on the job and at home. For example, restrictions on eligibility for driver's licenses have a gendered effect. Many migrants from our studies originate from rural communities in Mexico and Central America where driving is a masculinized activity; many women arrive without knowing how to drive. In many households, men arrived prior to their wives or partners and were often able to obtain legal driver's licenses or drive with an international license or one from their home country. On arrival, some women learn to drive, but they do so with the risk of driving without a legal license. The limited physical mobility of the women in our study contrasts with that of participants in Zentgraf's (2002) study of Salvadoran immigrants, who experienced increased physical mobility when in Southern California and described feeling less dependent on men than in their country of origin.

Undocumented immigration status is another factor that contributes to migrant women's dependency on male partners. Rosalba, the Salvadoran woman mentioned earlier, arrived in Williamsburg as an undocumented migrant. She recounted how her decision to *casarse* was driven in part by her recognition of her need for protection against the advances of the men in the household where she resided (she slept on the floor with several men). She ultimately moved in with and established a common law marriage with Leonardo, a young man from her home village in El Salvador. Leonardo's temporary protective status enabled him to obtain a work permit and an authentic social security number, making it easier to rent an apartment in his name, establish a phone line, and open a bank account. Leonardo also was able to buy a car and secure a driver's license. As long as their relationship remains stable, Rosalba's position is more secure than it was when she first arrived. However, this kind of relationship can be problematic, as it fosters dependency and vulnerability, making it difficult for a woman to leave the home without her male partner and affording the man a means of spatial control over her.

The fear of deportation contributes to women migrants' vulnerability vis-à-vis their male family members who either pay to bring them to this country or physically assist them in traveling to Williamsburg. Young girls brought to the United States by family members who pay their way are beholden to brothers-in-law, cousins, brothers, and uncles. This situation can lead to sexual abuse or the exploitation of these young women's labor.

In two cases, family members brought teenage girls to Williamsburg to help them care for young children, but neither enrolled the girls in school nor permitted them to study. In some instances, the only way to escape this situation is for young women to establish sexual relationships with older men who migrated previously and have housing of their own.

Dependency on a male partner for housing and transportation also makes women vulnerable to domestic abuse. For undocumented women, fear of separation from children in the United States or of jeopardizing custody of children who remain in communities of origin operate in conjunction with the fear instilled by police. Sometimes male domestic abusers explicitly prey on this fear as a form of control. As one woman in North Carolina told Natalia, after she tried to leave her abuser, "I want to leave home. He tells me that the children will stay with him, and if I take them, he will look for me and kill me. He threatens me!" Similarly, Guadalupe, a 30-year-old migrant woman in North Carolina, explained to Natalia, "Well . . . my husband has beaten me. . . . It has happened several times since we got married. We have been married almost six years. . . . I give thanks to God that he does not beat the children. Here I have two, but I want to bring the others here. When we are okay, we plan to bring them. But when he gets angry, he says that he is no longer going to bring them. He says that if we separate, he is going to go there and take them away from me."

For these women, layered on the power dynamics of gender and violence—emotional control, fear, and threats—is the insecurity, fear, and isolation that come with undocumented immigrant status, which make it even less likely that women will seek assistance from domestic violence centers, contact law enforcement, or leave the abusive partner (Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Salazar Parreñas 2001).

Women who do leave violent relationships must find housing in the scarce low-income housing markets in Williamsburg and the Research Triangle, a process made even more difficult without legal immigration status, documented earnings, and established credit. In cases in which men leave the relationship to take up with other women, their former partners (often pregnant or with small children) can be left homeless, with no income, and with little prospect of finding a job to cover the high cost of rent, child care, and household expenses. In one case, a Central American man in Williamsburg sexually assaulted Marta, his sister-in-law, while she and her husband lived with him as newly arrived migrants. The couple was able to move into the hotel where Marta worked, but with a young toddler and now pregnant with another child, finding adequate housing at an affordable rate was a huge challenge.

The gender-segmented labor market and working conditions in the service sector also contribute to women's social isolation (Hagan 1998). Many recently arrived migrant women in North Carolina work as private housekeepers and as live-in maids, and they are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault. As one such woman said, "I went to live in the house of a woman so I could take care of her son, and in exchange she would give me a room and food. . . . Her husband began harassing me, and he began to tell me to go out with him, and other things like that." Many women migrants in Williamsburg and the Research Triangle work in restaurants and hotels, and the seasonal and semi-informal organization of this work creates a temporary workforce whose labor market vulnerability is increased by undocumented immigration status. Whereas men's jobs often involve greater physical mobility and travel among construction and landscaping job sites, women's employment in restaurant kitchens and as housekeeping staff in hotels tends to isolate them, offering fewer opportunities to interact with natives or to learn English. Given the high cost of child care, when women become pregnant, they often leave the labor market to care for their children, reducing the household income considerably and rendering women more economically dependent on their male partners. Dani admitted to Jennifer that "it is easier for the man to work than for me. Since [my husband] has a car, he can mobilize to go wherever." Mariana said, "No, no, I'm not going to work just to earn enough to pay someone to take care of my daughter!" Given the spatial organization of Williamsburg and limited transportation options, dropping out of the labor force can further isolate women in the home.

Some migrants arrive with H2B visas (a visa for temporary or seasonal nonagricultural employment in the United States), to work in hotels where they are housed on site and have only limited contact with other community members and even local institutions. María Elena, a 38-year-old Mexican woman, was in an automobile accident while working as a guest worker in a hotel in Williamsburg. It took considerable effort on her part to find someone to take her to the community clinic to treat her injuries, and she missed several days of work as her arm was in a cast. After a long doctor's visit, she arrived at the hotel to find her belongings on the street, and her supervisor told her that she had missed too much work and was fired. At this point, María Elena's immigration status also took on the characteristics of liminal legality (Menjívar 2006), as her visa was contingent on her employment at the hotel. With nowhere else to go and faced with needing to send money home to her son whom she supported in Mexico, she moved in with a man with whom she had a romantic relationship. The couple occupied a room in the tiny house that he rented from

his employer. Although she found a job at another hotel within walking distance, María Elena still found herself in an extremely vulnerable position, as she depended on her partner for housing and economic support. The relationship quickly turned sour, and he began to physically abuse her.

## CONCLUSIONS: GENDER IN THE NEW BORDERLANDS

Our comparative analysis draws on borderlands theory but expands this framework by examining the structural inner workings of other construction within new borderlands of el Nuevo South. This research sheds light on the positioning of migrant women in the Nuevo South within a particular system of interlocking oppressions that occur at multiple, intersecting levels—from the social structural, to the institutional, to the interpersonal (Collins [1990] 2000, 230).

In our research sites, bordering and the other construction it entails affect men and women in different ways. For men, racially imbued legality tends to be enforced through the policing of public spaces, as their labor market participation and greater physical mobility make them more visible targets. For women, regulation of the borders involves the surveillance and control of their reproductive capacities as caretakers of children and the home. Labor conditions in the sex-segmented labor market also contribute to migrant women's isolation, and their labor market participation is inhibited by their caretaking responsibilities and the lack of affordable child care. Border enforcement in the community often operates in conjunction with gender-based power asymmetries in the home, including women's primary responsibility for the domestic sphere and their dependency on male partners and family members for earnings, housing, and transportation, increasing their isolation and susceptibility to physical and sexual violence.

This analysis reveals patterns in the structural conditions across the domains of workplace, home, and community that link these two emerging borderlands in the Nuevo South. Field research in these localities demonstrates the particular ways place-based conditions within the context of reception—for example, the suburbanized organization of space and the incipient nature of migrant networks—operate in tandem with gendered dynamics in the household and institutional spaces in the community to structure and constrain migrant women's agency (Hirsch 2003). The suburbanized organization of public space plays an important role in this gender-specific marginalization by bolstering women's dependency on male partners and inhibiting their abilities to form social networks and

community ties that help them find better jobs, share child care, pool resources, and develop social capital. Our research suggests that policies and programs that increase migrants' (especially women's) access to transportation and affordable child care could greatly enhance the potential both for migrants' more full participation in public life and for their collective action.

The regulation of migrant women's access to public resources occurs within gendered, largely women-only spaces of social services, community clinics, and charitable organizations associated with domestic sphere and caretaking responsibilities. Our research also points to the power that institutional gatekeepers—many of whom are women of color—can exercise in the construction of otherness and the enforcement of definitions of insiderness and outsidership. Konrad et al. (1998) finds that in private practices, staff views about uninsured mothers and those who are Medicaid recipients mean that these groups encountered the most difficulty in accessing medical care for their children. Staff members' negative attitudes amplified and reinforced other barriers to health care that already face uninsured and Medicaid patients.

As in cases of other receiving sites, migrant women do play important roles as community actors through their private-sphere activities that make settlement happen. But native-born women, by virtue of their strategic institutional locations in the highly gender-segregated occupations of health care and social services, act as key border enforcers of social membership. They are also important actors in using racial and cultural markers, including language differences, to identify and categorize migrant women as others and outsiders. A potential implication of these gatekeepers' roles in other construction is, in fact, to hinder migrants' settlement (or at least full participation).

That women (often women of color) occupy positions through which they enact marginalization through other construction—despite their low status and relative lack of authority in other situations—demonstrates the complexities of an interlocking system of power and privilege within newly emerging borderlands (Collins [1990] 2000). A particular constellation of vectors of oppression emerges, stemming from culture, language, and immigration status as well as race, class, and gender. Actors are positioned within this constellation with varying degrees of influence over the enforcement of definitions of social belonging. In a context of limited and shrinking resources, we see how members of groups who face oppression on other fronts (in this case, African American and other women in low-status jobs in health care and social services) can also harness power to become agents of bordering and contribute to impeding migrant women's

physical and economic mobility, personal independence, and access to social and economic resources.

Although this article has focused on migrants' marginalization, the histories and personal narratives of the migrant women of our study highlight lives of not only alienation and isolation but also resiliency. It is important to recognize that Latino/Latina migrants exercise agency in navigating the social interactions involved in border construction and challenge their identification as outsiders who do not belong (Castañeda and Zavella 2007; Hirsch 1999; Hardy-Fanta 1993, 1997). Latin American migrants in Williamsburg and the Research Triangle develop strategies for overcoming barriers to inclusion, such as pooling resources, working to establish relationships with others in their housing developments, and seeking out English classes. Growing political awareness and consciousness are evidenced by the fact that migrants in both locations took part in the May 2006 boycott to protest proposed immigration legislation. In some cases, individual undocumented immigrants even wrote letters of protest to state representatives. Migrants' politicization suggests that the clash of cultures, languages, and realities within new borderlands could also offer a site of counterhegemonic production through which migrants might collectively define themselves as active community participants capable of bringing about social change.

Finally, our findings suggest that actors who use their institutional position differently—to challenge dominant definitions of social membership—could be key allies in the struggle for migrants' inclusion. We are reminded of Anzaldúa's (1987, 107) recognition of the importance of allies in borderland struggles. Community educational efforts that cultivate dialogue, mutual understandings, and recognition between migrants and this group could be worthwhile endeavors for creating such alliances.

## NOTES

1. In some cases, we use the term *immigrant* when referring to policies and native perspectives that define this group according to their status as nonnatives. For example, we refer to anti-*immigrant* attitudes and discourses.

2. *La migra* is the term used by Latina/Latino migrants to refer to immigration officials.

3. See Deeb-Sossa (2007) and Mendez (forthcoming) for detailed discussions of methodology.

4. Most of the migrant women were unaware of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, which protects migrant victims of crimes against women, sexual abuse, and domestic violence by allowing them to remain in the

United States (temporarily and in some cases longer) and receive federal and state assistance (see <http://www.uscis.gov/>).

5. In the case of California in the 1990s, it was precisely women's highly visible reproductive role as mothers and caretakers that Hondagneu-Sotelo (1996) argues fueled the shift in anti-immigrant discourse from men's stealing jobs to women and children as threats to scarce public resources.

6. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act provides that no person shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Regulations prohibit funding recipients from restricting an individual in any way in the enjoyment of any advantage or privilege enjoyed by others receiving any service, financial aid, or other benefit under the program or from utilizing criteria or methods of administration that have the effect of subjecting individuals to discrimination because of their race, color, or national origin (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2004). Compliance with these regulations with respect to persons of limited English proficiency has recently been contested at the national level as well as in public service circles in our field sites.

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