



Keeping Them in Their Place: Migrant Women Workers in Spain's Strawberry Industry

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Abstract. The idea of guest-worker migration has resurfaced in recent decades as the global agri-food industry has confronted a shortage of workers willing to take low-wage and often seasonal jobs. To date, there have been very few cases studies of these twenty-first century guest-worker programs and their role in managing contemporary labor migration. This article examines guest-worker migration in the strawberry industry of southern Spain. In this case, guest-worker programs attempt to regulate and enforce the circular migration of foreign workers in Spain. By making future work contracts contingent on migrants' return to their country of origin, by recruiting migrant workers from various countries, and by targeting women with dependent children, these programs help to discipline migrant workers into the rigors of circular migration. We argue that although the program has been lauded as a model of twenty-first century labor migration, it succeeds primarily by keeping foreign, low-wage, women workers 'in their place'.

Introduction

Since the 1980s, agri-food restructuring has transformed many marginal rural communities into centers of high-value food production (Watts and Goodman, 1997). Such revitalization has created a demand for low-skilled workers in communities once defined by high rates of outmigration. Invariably, the workers lured into these low-wage jobs are immigrant workers, who have been moving beyond traditional immigrant gateways and into new destinations as a result. From the plains states of the U.S. Midwest (Gouveia et al., 2005), to farming communities in southern Europe (Kasimis, 2005), the arrival of foreign-born workers has caused more than a little tension. Many of these destinations are ill-equipped and often unwilling to serve a culturally distinct, linguistically diverse, and mostly low-income immigrant population (Goździak and Martin, 2005; Massey, 2008). In addition, the rise in undocumented migration that typically occurs in these contexts inspires social anxiety and a call for closed borders. Business demands for immigrant workers and community

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demands for closed borders have left many rural communities at something of an impasse. In response, some policy-makers have embraced an alternative: bring immigrants in as temporary guest workers and send them home when the work is done (Martin, 2003).

In the mid-twentieth century, guest-worker programs were popular in both the United States and Western Europe, where labor shortages frustrated seasonal labor recruitment. Such programs came to an end in the 1960s and 1970s as political opposition grew and economic crises deepened on both sides of the Atlantic (Martin, 2003; Castles, 2006). But talk of guest workers resurfaced when the agri-food industry reorganized in the 1980s. By the 1990s, countries like Germany and Spain were reinventing guest-worker programs for twenty-first century economic needs and political realities (Castles, 2006). And though guest-worker programs are still controversial in the United States, they have been debated, most recently in the Utah legislature (Romboy, 2011). The contemporary appeal of guest workers is more or less the same as it was mid-century. Employers can access a steady supply of low-wage workers, control workers through the terms of the contract, adjust the size of their work-force with ease, dismiss guest workers as they see fit, mitigate anti-immigrant sentiment in the local community, and avoid some of the social anxieties that surround undocumented migration. The advantages of guest workers are perhaps all the more critical in an era of 'lean' agri-food production, since securing a flexible, low-wage work-force is central to employers' ability to provide quality, low cost products to the market-place (Rogaly, 2008). Guest workers may also prove critical to new immigrant destinations, where the presence of immigrants has become politically and socially contentious.

What do these twenty-first century guest-worker programs look like? And how do they work? To explore these questions, we examine a set of guest-worker programs that have arisen in southern Spain, where strawberry production has expanded in recent decades. Strawberry harvesting is extremely labor-intensive and done exclusively by hand. With few resident workers willing to partake in such work, growers have recruited heavily from outside of Spain, from Eastern Europe and North Africa in particular. They have targeted mostly women with children. Growers not only perceive women as being a more obedient work-force, but they view women's more 'delicate' hands as being ideal for high-value food production. To the architects of the guest-worker programs, women's family responsibilities also tug them back to their country of origin once the harvest ends. Spanish and European Union (EU) officials have lauded these programs as an 'ethical' approach to migration because they resolve Spain's demand for seasonal labor while ensuring the return of workers, and the money they earn, to labor-exporting countries (Martin, 2008a). We shall argue that the real appeal of these programs is that they help keep foreign, low-wage, women workers 'in their place' – obedient, hard-working, and ultimately back in their country of origin.

Global Foods, Migrant Workers

To understand the role that guest-worker programs play in managing labor migration, we must first consider restructuring in the agri-food industry. Since the second half of the twentieth century, there have been at least two major trends in agricultural production. The first trend is the globalization of agri-food production and distribution. Though a global agri-food system has existed since at least the sixteenth cen-

tury, economic and technological changes in the second half of the twentieth century made the global sourcing of food more extensive. Specifically, free trade agreements and advancements in long-distance transport and refrigeration gave agri-food firms the ability to supply global food chains year round (Watts and Goodman, 1997). The second trend is the flexibilization of labor. In a competitive global market-place, wherein profit margins are slim and consumer tastes are volatile, firms want flexibility in adjusting the size of their work-force, the wages paid to workers, and the conditions under which work is performed. To this end, many agri-food firms have mirrored strategies in the industrial sector by contracting out production (Little and Watts, 1994), hiring workers through temp agencies or on short-term contracts (Raynolds, 1994), and relying on women, migrants, and minorities to meet labor needs (Collins, 1993). Though flexible work arrangements can be advantageous to workers, they tend to result in less employment security and fewer labor protections (Kalleberg, 2000).

These trends in agri-food production have changed the landscape of rural communities in various ways. To begin, new crops and food industries have expanded into many communities, revitalizing rural and regional economies (Raynolds, 1994; Gouveia et al., 2005). Because labor market flexibility is so central to these new agri-food industries, new patterns of labor force participation have often cropped up alongside these industries (Rogaly, 2008; Preibisch, 2010). Migrant workers, for example, feature prominently in these industries because they can be paid less and/or hired and disbanded with relative ease. Such workers may not have documents to work and reside in these communities, resulting in a social layer of workers that are stripped of most labor and social rights. Social scientists have looked at how the recruitment of immigrant workers by agri-food employers has given rise to immigrant communities in non-traditional destinations (Goździak and Martin, 2005; Massey, 2008). These non-traditional immigrant destinations tend to feature weaker immigrant social networks, fewer ethnic-based services, and less adequate social services, which can strain community relations and immigrant well-being (Bump, 2005). Of course, not all migrant workers permanently settle in these destinations. In countries that have guest-worker programs, the push for flexibility has led many employers to hire temporary foreign workers, who live temporarily in host communities, returning home to their country at the end of their contract (Rogaly, 2008; Preibisch, 2010).

In addition to migrant workers, studies have identified the growing use of women workers in agri-food industries (Collins, 1993; Raynolds, 1994). Indeed, Standing (1999) argues that the growing preference for women workers and the rise in more precarious forms of work signal a 'feminization of labor' in industries worldwide. By putting a premium on cost-cutting competitiveness, economic restructuring has led to employer preferences for workers who are willing to take low-wage, insecure jobs (Standing, 1999, p. 585). These workers are most often women who have entered competitive labor markets to help sustain their families in the face of economic crisis and household poverty. The growing reliance on low-wage women workers has been well documented in studies of export manufacturing (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Lee, 1998; Salzinger, 2003) and agri-export production (Collins, 1993; Raynolds, 1994; Lee, 2010) in the global South. There is also research on the growing number of immigrant women workers in the global North (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Parreñas, 2001; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002). Most of latter research focuses on immigrant women in female-dominated occupations like domestic work.

To date, few studies have analysed women migrant workers in the agri-food industry of the global North. One notable exception is Preibisch and Encalada (2010), who study the participation of Mexican women in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. Under the terms of this guest-worker program, employers are allowed to select their employees on the basis of nationality and sex (Preibisch and Encalada, 2010, p. 297). For the most part, employers in this program prefer men, with women constituting as little as 2% of the migrant work-force. To explain this preference, the authors point to long-held perceptions in Canada that farm-work is men's work. On the supply side, women are constrained by prevailing gender norms, which frame their outmigration as an act of bad mothering and a sign of sexual indiscretion. Thus, female migrants in this case are viewed as 'unusual participants' in seasonal labor migration (Preibisch and Encalada, 2010, p. 290).¹

The Spanish case highlighted in this article reveals employer preferences for women migrant workers. And in this regard, the guest-worker programs coming out of southern Spanish may be viewed as constituting a flexible labor strategy *par excellence*. The workers, in this case, are migrant, seasonal, and female – flexible (read: vulnerable) in almost every respect. Moreover, and perhaps more interesting, these guest-worker programs are being touted as examples of 'ethical' migration (Gerson, 2007a) and a model that should be replicated in other countries considering long-term migration fixes (Márquez et al., 2009). If the Spanish case is being viewed as a model for twenty-first century migration, we should look closely at the features of these guest-worker programs and the migrant labor forces on which they rely. In the section that follows, we trace the rise of these programs and our methods for studying them in depth.

Return of the Guest Worker

Countries in North America and Western Europe experimented with guest-worker programs during and after World War II in response to labor shortages (Martin, 2003; Plewa and Miller, 2005). Most of these programs ended by the mid-1970s as unemployment and opposition to guest-worker programs rose among native-born workers. By the 1990s, western countries began to experiment anew with circular migration programs. Having ended the Bracero program in 1964, for example, the United States established limited guest-worker programs like the H-1B program for skilled professionals and the H-2A program for agricultural workers (Martin, 2003). Guest-worker programs also sprang up in countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Spain (Martin, 2003, 2008b). In contrast to earlier guest-worker programs, which were structured as large-scale national programs, the newer programs tended to be small in scale and negotiated through bilateral agreements with individual labor-exporting countries.² Martin (2008a, p. 9) estimates that there were some 200 such agreements in the world by 2000.

As a country currently playing host to guest workers, Spain is something of a unique case. Historically, the country was a net *exporter* of migrants. Demographic and economic changes, however, turned the country into a net *importer* of migrants in the 1980s. During that decade, the country's birth-rate declined dramatically, leaving the country with one of the lowest fertility rates in the world. Also during the 1980s, Spain joined the EU and experienced a major economic boom that lasted throughout the 1990s (Martin, 2008a). These changes meant that Spain faced labor shortages in industries like construction and agriculture. Faced with expanding op-

portunities elsewhere in the economy, native-born workers all but abandoned these industries, leaving employers to look to immigrants to fill these jobs. The resulting growth in Spain's foreign-born population has been nothing short of spectacular. In the early 1980s, less than one percent of Spain's population was foreign born. By 2010, 12% of the country's population of 45 million was foreign born, the vast majority from Romania, Morocco, and Ecuador (*Migration News*, 2010).

Until 1985, Spain had an 'open door policy' toward immigrants, who were assumed to be in Spain only temporarily as they made their way northward into other parts of Europe (Plewa and Miller, 2005). Immigrants, for example, were not required to have a visa to enter the country.³ By the mid-1980s, the growing demand for foreign workers and Spain's ascension into the EU changed the country's overall approach to migration. As the economy expanded, the country's undocumented immigrant population grew. Immigrants from Africa, for example, began arriving by small boats across the Strait of Gibraltar to work without permits. The question for Spanish authorities became how to balance the economic demand for foreign-born workers with the political need to control undocumented migration (Arango and Martin, 2003). In response, the country implemented its first modern immigration policy (*Ley de Extranjería*) in 1985. The law included fines, though no criminal penalties, for employers who knowingly hired undocumented immigrants. By 1993, Spain also had a system in place (*contingente* system) to grant temporary work visas to immigrants, though immigrants could apply while living in Spain (Plewa and Miller, 2005).

The piecemeal attempts by the Spanish government to regulate the influx of foreign-born workers were not exactly successful. Immigrant workers regularly overstayed their work visas, creating a layer of Spanish society that had no rights. In addition, undocumented immigrants were regularly legalized, creating a system of 'hidden regularization' (Plewa and Miller, 2005; Márquez et al., 2009). Facing mounting pressure from the EU and its own citizens, the Spanish government passed a new immigration law in 2000 (*Ley de Extranjería LO 8/2000*). Although this law gave documented immigrants similar rights and freedoms as Spanish citizens, the law ended mass legalizations and required that foreign workers obtain temporary work permits *before* entering the country (Arango and Martin, 2003; Plewa and Miller, 2005). As part of this immigration overhaul, the Spanish government signed bilateral migration agreements with countries who agreed to assist in controlling undocumented migration to Spain. In exchange, workers from these countries received preference in obtaining temporary work visas (Plewa and Miller, 2005, p. 73). Those countries with which Spain signed agreements included: Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Colombia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Morocco (Márquez et al., 2009).⁴

In this article, we consider one Spanish province's experience with temporary migrant workers. The province of Huelva is located along the coast in southern Spain and is dominated by agriculture, the cultivation of strawberries in particular. The vast majority of guest-worker contracts issued each year by Spain are for work in Huelva, making this province a good case of guest-worker migration. In addition, a number of guest-worker pilot projects have been developed by officials in Cartaya, a locality in the Huelva province that produces much of the strawberries that Huelva exports. Given the expansion of the strawberry industry, Cartaya has seen a dramatic influx of foreign-born workers. By 2009, its population of 18 000 was over 17% foreign born (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2009). The guest-worker experi-

ments that Cartaya initiated have catapulted it into the international limelight due to their apparent success. One project receiving much attention targets women with dependent children in Morocco. The idea behind the program is that women will be more likely to return to their country of origin at the end of their contract if they have children at home waiting for them. In the remainder of this article, we consider these experiences and experiments with guest-worker migration. We are particularly interested in how particular immigrant workers have been constructed as ideal guest workers.

To explore the Huelva case, we draw on secondary literature and field-work on migrant workers in Spain's strawberry industry. Most of the academic literature on the subject has been limited to the fields of economics and political science, though the subject has received some sociological attention by academics in Spain. To investigate some of our more sociological questions, we conducted preliminary field work in Morocco and Spain. In 2008, the second author traveled to Morocco to study development initiatives in a rural Berber village in the Ouarzazate Province of southern Morocco. Historically, the village has been characterized by high rates of male outmigration and female subsistence farming. Women's paid work has been minimal, typically involving the selling of eggs or bread. But the women became a target of recruitment for Spain's strawberry industry in the years preceding the second author's field-work. Over the course of three months, the second author conducted some 30 interviews with women in the village about various development initiatives in the area. Of these women, six were considering applying for Cartaya's guest-worker program and one woman had already participated in the program. The second author explored how the women in the village perceived this opportunity, why the women considered applying to the program, and what the experience was like for the woman who participated.

In 2011, the first three authors followed up on this information by conducting qualitative research in Cartaya. During the strawberry harvest, they spent 10 days in Cartaya interviewing migrant workers, strawberry employers, and local officials. The first author speaks Spanish and acted as translator for interviews with Spanish employers and officials. The second author speaks Moroccan Arabic and acted as translator for interviews with migrant workers. In total, they conducted interviews with eight migrant women workers from Morocco. Though this was a relatively small number, the interviews were intensive and involved multiple visits to the women's residences. They also conducted structured interviews with three trade union officials, two industry representatives, two city officials, and two academics that have studied the case. One of the city officials was the mayor of Cartaya, Juan Millán Jaldón, who was the primary architect of the guest-worker programs. They supplemented these interviews with field observations of three migrant worker houses, a large strawberry farm, a strawberry co-operative, and community life in Cartaya. In the sections that follow, we report the major findings from this research.

Modeling Circular Migration

The strawberry industry serves as a prime example of agro-restructuring in Spain and the increased reliance on migrant workers, guest workers in particular. Since the 1960s, coastal land in Spain's southern province of Huelva has been taken up in the production of strawberries, otherwise known as 'red gold' (Márquez et al., 2009) (see Figure 1). Such production expanded markedly after 1986 when Spain joined



Figure 1. Map of Spain.

the EU (*Rural Migration News*, 2008). By 2008, Spain was producing some 300 000 tons of strawberries per year, most of which was exported to Germany, the United Kingdom, and France (Martin, 2008a, p. 19). Today, Spain is the leading exporter of strawberries, producing almost 10% of the world's strawberries (*Rural Migration News*, 2010). Though some aspects of strawberry production have been mechanized, the process of planting and picking is still done primarily by hand.

Historically, strawberry production in Huelva was dominated by family farms and family labor. This changed when Spain joined the EU. The larger Spanish economy was flourishing and Spaniards were eager to take advantage of other, more lucrative job opportunities. Between 1985 and 2005, the percentage of the Spanish workforce employed in agriculture declined from 16% to 5% (Martin, 2008a, p. 17). As a result, export agriculture in Huelva, which was expanding rapidly, became a 'magnet for migrants' (Martin, 2008a, p. 17). In our interview with Mercedes Gordo, a historian at the University of Huelva, Gordo emphasized that it was not simply a labor shortage that created a demand for migrant workers. It was a shortage of *flexible* workers – those willing to take precarious, low-wage, and labor-intensive jobs in agriculture. Indeed, as Rogaly (2008) explains, there has been a concentration of power among global retailers (e.g. Walmart), who have been able to appropriate a greater share of the value of fresh produce. Faced with lower profit margins, growers have sought out workers who are willing to work under intense working conditions, at low wages, and for whatever period of time is demanded of them (Preibisch, 2010). These are often immigrant workers (Rogaly, 2008).

As the previous section noted, Spain first admitted temporary foreign workers in 1993 under an earlier *contingente* system. Under this system, employers who could not find enough Spanish workers could request temporary foreign workers. Immigrants, both documented and undocumented, could apply for temporary work permits while living in Spain (Plewa, 2009). Between 1997 and 2000, some 25000 permits were issued annually for the Huelva Province alone (Plewa, 2009). Moroccan immigrants, who had become a sizable undocumented population in Spain by this time, obtained the vast majority of these permits (Plewa and Miller, 2005).⁵ As with most foreign workers who obtained such permits, Moroccans rarely returned

to their country of origin at the end of their contract. Instead, they resettled into Spain as undocumented immigrants. It was, in part, the growing size of this undocumented population that prompted the Spanish government to implement a new system of temporary work visas. Beginning in 2001, those workers whose countries had signed bilateral agreements with Spain were given preference in obtaining temporary work visas. By signing such agreements, these countries agreed to assist Spain in controlling undocumented migration and to help Spain recruit temporary workers. From this point on, the only legal route for immigrants to work and reside in Spain was to obtain a temporary work contract while in their country of origin. These contracts are referred to as 'contracts in origin' because they are negotiated in the migrant's home country.

The first wave of guest workers to arrive in Huelva in 2001 under this new temporary work program included 540 Polish workers and 198 Moroccan workers (see Table 1) (Plewa, 2009, p. 226). In the years that followed, the use of guest workers expanded dramatically, both in terms of sheer numbers and in terms of the sending countries involved. Between 2006 and 2008, some 30 000 guest workers were contracted annually. In addition to Poland and Morocco, they came from such countries as Romania, Bulgaria, Ecuador, and Colombia (Plewa, 2009, p. 226). Workers typically come on six-to-nine month contracts to work during the strawberry harvest, which begins in February (*Rural Migration News*, 2010). Before recruiting temporary foreign workers, strawberry growers must first certify that they cannot find enough Spanish, EU, or legally resident foreign workers to fill their labor needs and they must do so some 105 days before the expected start date (Martin, 2008a, p. 19). Five employer organizations have sprung up in Huelva to assist growers in this certification process: Freshuelva, ASAJA, APCA, COAG and UPA-CORA (Martin, 2008a; Plewa, 2009). Individual employers submit their request for guest workers to one of these organizations, which then submit employer requests to a Labor Migration Taskforce, which certifies the labor shortage and approves the employer requests (Plewa, 2009). These requests must be approved a second time at the national level. Typically, the government approves fewer requests than employers submit (Plewa and Miller, 2005).

Though the certification process is meant to ensure that a labor shortage actually exists, there has been much controversy around the process.⁶ One strawberry grower we interviewed indicated that the process of certification was more symbolic than anything. Even in the present economic crisis, he cannot find resident workers to work the strawberry harvest. In 2010, the Spanish government gave him a list of 30 names registered with the unemployment office. He was required to call these

Table 1. Huelva's temporary foreign workers by country of origin, 2001–2008.

Country	2000– 2001	2001– 2002	2002– 2003	2003– 2004	2004– 2005	2005– 2006	2006– 2007	2007– 2008
Bulgaria	0	0	0	508	604	941	2,577	4,000
Colombia	0	149	177	105	82	8	2	0
Ecuador	0	0	15	8	64	26	12	0
Morocco	198	336	95	635	1,094	2,330	1,946	12 000
Poland	540	4,954	7,535	8,811	7,361	9,796	-	3,500
Romania	0	970	4,178	10 933	13 186	19 153	26 278	11 000
Ukraine	0	0	0	0	0	0	724	4,000
Total	738	6,409	12 000	21 000	22 391	32 254	31 539	34 500

Source: Plewa, 2009.

names before his requests for temporary foreign workers would be approved. Out of 30, only three showed up to work. And in all three cases, the individuals worked for a month before quitting. By law, agricultural workers must work 35 days to qualify for 180 days of unemployment benefits. According to this and other employers (Plewa, 2009), many resident workers simply work the 35-day minimum to qualify for unemployment.

Union representatives are skeptical of these claims (Plewa and Miller, 2005). In an interview with representatives from one of Spain's major trade unions, for example, representatives insisted that there are plenty of resident workers who would take these jobs. It is difficult to assess the validity of either claim, but it is clear that one of the incentives of contracting guest workers, at least where employers are concerned, is that the contract ties guest workers to a specific employer for an established period of time (usually six to nine months). In short, the guest worker, unlike the Spanish, EU, or legally resident foreign worker, cannot leave to seek employment elsewhere (for a similar finding in Britain's horticultural industry, see Rogaly, 2008).

Once certified to import guest workers, growers rely on the five business organizations to recruit workers. These organizations work with labor recruiting offices in labor-exporting countries (Martin, 2008a; Plewa, 2009). Job applicants must fill out a questionnaire, provide medical and criminal records, and complete an extensive interview about their work experience, family structure, and future plans. After selection, guest workers are issued personal identification numbers by the Spanish Ministry of the Interior, which authorizes them to obtain temporary work visas (Martin, 2008a, p. 19). As part of the bilateral agreements, growers must supply housing that conforms to state regulations, organize transportation to and from Spain, and pay for half of the worker's transportation costs (Márquez et al., 2009). While they are under contract, guest workers are entitled to most labor and social rights, including a minimum wage, free health care and medical aid, and social security benefits (Plewa and Miller, 2005, pp. 76–77). Workers who complete a harvesting cycle, return to their country of origin, and check in with a Spanish consulate are given hiring preference in subsequent years. This hiring preference is the primary incentive for workers to return home at the end of their labor contract. Guest workers who complete at least three years of fulfilling their contracts, including the stipulation that they return home, may apply for permanent residency. These applications are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Huelva's wholesale adoption of these reforms and the sheer volume of temporary foreign workers that it contracts have prompted Spanish and EU officials to watch Huelva's experience with guest-worker migration closely. Their overall assessment is that it has been a resounding success, so successful that, in 2007, the European Commission Vice President began encouraging other countries to adopt the 'Huelva model' (Gerson, 2007a; Márquez et al., 2009). The criteria such officials are using to deem the model a success are not altogether clear. But one area in which the Huelva model is arguably successful is in providing a semblance of control over the migration 'problem'. In an era of agro-industrial restructuring, immigrant workers are touching down in new destinations where there is a demand for flexible, low-wage labor. Whether it be rural Virginia (Bump, 2005) or rural Greece (Kasimis, 2005), there has been a 'settling out' of immigrants into rural places. This trend puts pressure on the social service infrastructure of rural communities and sparks anxiety among local residents, who fear an increase in crime, economic competition, and a dilution of core community values and identity (Gozdziak and Martin, 2005). Huel-

va's guest-worker program resolves some of this pressure and anxiety by regulating the employment and working conditions of migrants and by ensuring that migrant workers return home.

Strawberry growers and government officials declared in interviews that immigrants were well received in Huelva. There were no community tensions, they insisted, and no xenophobic response to the seasonal influx of migrant workers. Because we did not survey a cross-section of Huelva communities, we cannot say whether this is the case. But assuming this is true, it could be that the guest-worker programs helped to ease tensions that had been brewing as a result of a lax migration policy and a large population of undocumented workers. Indeed, it was the growing issue over undocumented migration that prompted the Spanish government to overhaul its migration policy and to tackle its temporary foreign-worker program.

Under the new system, immigrants wishing to work in Spain must obtain a temporary work contract in their home country and they must leave at the end of their contract. Though guest workers are guaranteed considerable labor and social rights under this system, the terms of these contracts help keep foreign workers in low-status jobs, in one place of employment, and, ultimately, in their country of origin. In a sense, the new approach to guest-worker migration helps ease the tensions wrought by undocumented migration by keeping immigrants 'in their place'. Of course, the system is not perfect. Martin (2008a, p. 18) estimates that some 40% of guest workers fail to return to their country of origin under this system. Thus, Spanish officials and employers have had to use other tools to ensure that foreign workers fall in line with the dictates of the new guest-worker model.

Constructing Temporary Workers

The bilateral labor agreements that serve as the centre-piece of Spain's experiment with guest workers tend to be with labor-exporting countries with which Spain has some geographic, economic, or political relationship. For example, Spain's colonial history with Latin America helps explain the agreements with countries like Ecuador. Likewise, Spain's inclusion in the EU and the ties to this regional block among Eastern European countries help explain the agreements with countries like Romania. Geographic proximity to and historical migration streams from countries like Morocco help explain agreements with particular African countries. After the 2000 immigration law was passed, and after various bilateral agreements had been signed, Huelva's strawberry growers had a choice of countries in which to recruit strawberry workers. Though they would eventually contract a small pool of workers from Ecuador and Colombia, most growers were never enthusiastic about contracting from Latin America due to the high transportation costs involved (*Rural Migration News*, 2008; Márquez et al., 2009). Instead, they turned initially to workers in Morocco and Poland.

Morocco was not at all an unusual country from which to recruit workers. After all, Moroccan workers had long been contracted to work the strawberry harvest under the earlier *contingente* system. But Spain had a history of strained diplomatic ties with Morocco. Moreover, the much-publicized murder of a Spanish woman by a Moroccan national in a neighboring province had resulted in ethnic tension (Plewa and Miller, 2005). Thus, Huelva concentrated most of its recruitment efforts in Poland. According to Mercedes Gordo, who has studied the recruitment of Polish guest workers extensively, Spain had a special interest in Poland. Poland's looming ascen-

sion into the EU signaled the potential for new consumer and investment markets. Thus, Spain had an interest in furthering diplomatic ties with the up-and-coming EU member. Poland, of course, had its own interests in negotiating the agreement. With high rates of unemployment, it was interested in job opportunities abroad for Polish workers. Whatever the case, the decision to concentrate recruitment in Poland caused more than a little resentment among resident Moroccan workers, who had enjoyed most of the temporary work visas up until this time (Plewa, 2009).

Polish guest workers remained the preferred labor source in Huelva until 2004. Under the terms of the guest-worker program, migrants who return home at the end of their employment contract are given preference for hiring the following year. Thus, many of the guest workers in the early 2000s were Polish 'repeaters'. But it is also the case that the number of guest workers expanded dramatically and growers continued to bring in more Polish workers. Indeed, the number of Polish guest workers contracted in Huelva rose from 540 in 2001 to 8,811 in 2004 (Plewa, 2009, p. 226). Gordo attributes the preference for Polish workers to the fact that employers were prone to stick with workers with whom they were familiar. In 2004, however, Poland was admitted into the EU. As members of the EU, Polish citizens have full labor mobility, meaning that they may reside and work in any EU member state. Poland's ascension into the EU signaled a decline in Polish guest workers for at least two reasons. First, the infusion of EU dollars into Poland meant a more dynamic Polish economy that could retain at least some of its work-force. Second, the ability to work anywhere in the EU compelled many Polish workers to migrate elsewhere in Europe where opportunities were more lucrative (Plewa, 2009). Anticipating the departure of Polish workers, Huelva had begun looking to Romania to fill a greater share of its guest-worker contracts in 2002. Thus, by 2004, the number of Romanian guest workers (10933) had surpassed the number of Polish guest workers (8,811) (see Table 1) (Plewa, 2009, p. 226). Until 2007, Romanian workers constituted the largest contingent of temporary foreign workers in Huelva.

Like Polish workers in 2004, many Romanian workers left the strawberry fields for more lucrative jobs once Romania became a member of the EU in 2007 (Martin, 2008a). Though many Polish and Romanian workers continue to work as seasonal laborers in the strawberry industry, their numbers are far lower. Faced with another shortage of temporary foreign workers, Huelva decided to grant an increasing number of seasonal contracts to Moroccans workers. In 2008, following Romania's ascension into the EU, 12000 of the 34500 contracted workers in Huelva were from Morocco (35%), up from 635 (3%) in 2004 (see Table 1) (Plewa, 2009, p. 226). Again, Moroccan workers have long been a major source of low-wage labor in Spain and in Europe more generally. Indeed, since gaining its independence from France in 1956, Morocco has become one of the world's top labor-exporting countries (Haas, 2007). But as immigration policies tightened in Europe throughout the 1980s, Moroccan migrants began to remain in Europe permanently rather than attempt a more circular pattern of migration. As a result, circular migration rates among Moroccans are among the lowest of all immigrant groups in Europe (Haas, 2007). This has given Moroccan workers something of a bad reputation as guest workers. According to Mercedes Gordo, Spain turned to Morocco as a last resort after facing a shortage of Eastern European guest workers.

Whether the racial and cultural features of the Moroccan population exacerbated the poor reputation of Moroccan immigrants is difficult to say. Moroccan immigrants are overwhelmingly Muslim and have physical features that tend to mark

them as North African. Walking through the heart of Cartaya, it is indeed easy to distinguish Moroccan from Spanish, especially where the women are concerned. Moroccan women typically wear ankle length skirts and head scarves. They rarely sit in cafes and are more likely to congregate in small groups on the plaza. The language differences between them and the Spanish population cement this segregation, such that Moroccan women tend to live on the fringes of Spanish society. Given that Moroccan men historically dominated Moroccan migration to Spain and have been in Spain longer, Moroccan men tend to be a bit more integrated. They know more Spanish, they interact more socially with Spaniards, and they blend in more in terms of dress and appearance. But by our observations, there were no significant numbers of Moroccan men at cafés, which would be customary in Morocco. And it is clear that even Moroccan men tend to restrict themselves to Moroccan-dominated social spaces such as Moroccan shops.

The Spanish growers and officials we interviewed insisted that there were no racial or cultural tensions between the Spanish and Moroccan populations. One grower admitted that he was nervous when recruiters first started sending him Moroccan workers. He was unfamiliar with the culture, he explained, and he was accustomed to Eastern European workers at that point. But once they started working, he was impressed with their work ethic. As another grower explained to a reporter for the *Christian Science Monitor*: 'Any business owner wants people who will get up early, work all day, that don't smoke, don't drink, don't go to the discotheque' (Gerson, 2007b). One of the growers interviewed continues to employ Polish and Romanian workers on a seasonal basis. But he also asks for Moroccan guest workers each year. Unlike the Polish and Romanian workers, the Moroccan workers do not have labor mobility. Their contracts are tied to a specific employer. Thus, the grower never has to worry about them leaving to work on another farm, for another industry, or in another country. As for any tensions that the seasonal presence of Moroccan workers might produce in the surrounding communities, they are minimized by housing most guest workers outside the towns and near the strawberry fields.

From the history of Huelva's guest-worker program, it appears that Spanish growers and officials are constantly chasing a new labor pool to meet the seasonal demand for workers. Just when they secure one pool of workers (e.g. Polish workers), the supply dries up and they must look elsewhere (e.g. Romania and Morocco). Though Morocco has no plans to enter the EU, Spain is not settling on Morocco as its sole source of guest workers. In recent years, Spain has conducted pilot guest-worker programs with countries like Senegal, the Philippines, and the Ukraine. It has also considered programs with Mali and Moldova.⁷ However arduous this constant searching for guest workers might be, there is some logic to constructing a pool of diverse guest workers. Sachs and Alston (2010) note that agricultural employers rely on hiring a diverse work-force as a way to stoke ethnic tension and discipline workers. Under the terms of Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, for example, employers are permitted to pick the social characteristics (i.e. the gender, race, and ethnicity) of guest workers. Using racial essentialisms (e.g. Jamaicans are stronger), employers segment migrant workers into different jobs. This practice allows them to discipline workers by encouraging ethnic competition, preventing inter-ethnic socializing, and reminding workers of their 'disposability' (Preibisch and Encalada, 2010, pp. 304–306).

Interviews with strawberry growers and migrant workers indicated that Polish, Romanian, and Moroccan workers are not channeled into different positions. And

observations of strawberry harvesting confirmed this. In addition to working side by side, migrant workers from different countries typically live together in dormitories, houses, or trailers. Inter-ethnic relations appeared to be relatively co-operative. Even so, the presence of migrant workers from other countries serves as a constant reminder to migrant workers that theirs is not the only country participating in the program. At any moment, another bilateral agreement might be signed and another nationality might come to dominate the strawberry harvest. The Moroccan migrants interviewed, for example, were concerned about their reputation as Moroccan workers. They wanted to be known as hard workers and reliable migrants. Though we cannot say whether it is a conscious strategy on the part of Spain, recruiting guest workers from different countries has the effect of reminding guest workers of their replaceability and ensuring that guest workers will work hard to protect their future work prospects. In their efforts to keep workers compliant and otherwise 'in their place', Spanish officials and employers have at least one other tool in their arsenal, namely the use of a feminized work-force. To this final, critical ingredient in Huelva's model of migration we now turn.

Managing Migrant Mothers

From the beginning, the guest-worker agreements developed in southern Spain targeted women migrants. When employers first started recruiting from Poland, for example, they expressed a preference for women workers, though this was not a requirement. And when Spain and Senegal signed a bilateral labor agreement in 2007, strawberry growers requested women in particular (Martin, 2008a, p. 20). Given this preference for women workers, well over 95% of the guest workers recruited to Huelva have been women (Márquez et al., 2009). Growers justify their preference for women with the argument that strawberries are delicate produce, requiring 'delicate' hands for harvesting (Márquez et al., 2009). These arguments echo justifications for the predominance of women in global assembly plants, where women's 'nimble' fingers and 'agreeable' disposition supposedly make them well suited for routine assembly work (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Lee, 1998). In reality, the preference for women is due primarily to women's lower wages and weaker attachment to labor markets, which make them an ideal source of cheap, flexible labor (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Lee, 1998). Indeed, it was not until export agriculture expanded and growers came to rely on immigrant workers that the area's agricultural work-force became feminized. Before this time, farm-workers were predominantly men.

According to Mercedes Gordo, the first wave of women Polish guest workers were mostly between the ages of 18 and 25. They tended to be single and childless. As such, they had a reputation for partying, mingling with men, and showing up late for work. Thus, between 2002 and 2003, the profile of the woman guest worker began to change. As Huelva expanded its recruitment into other countries in Eastern Europe (e.g. Romania and Bulgaria), growers expressed a preference for women a bit older (25–30) who were married with children.⁸ Of the temporary work visas issued in Romania in the 2000s, for example, over half were to women between the ages of 26 and 55, suggesting a major target was women who were married with children (Bleahu, 2004). Whether these older women were, in fact, more productive as workers, we cannot say. But it is clear that employers began to have a particular idea of the most appropriate women workers for the strawberry harvest, namely

women who would focus on work and limit their movements to the strawberry fields and residential camp.

Married women with children were construed as the ideal strawberry worker in at least one other respect, namely that they would return to their families in their country of origin at the end of their employment contract (Márquez et al., 2009). According to Mercedes Gordo, the strawberry growers are less concerned about the possibility that guest workers will not return to their country of origin. They are solely interested in workers that will come in on short-term labor contracts and work hard for the duration of the contract. It was the Spanish government that was most interested in ensuring that guest workers returned home at the conclusion of their contract because it was the Spanish government that was concerned with controlling undocumented migration. To officials, mothers were ideal migrants. They had family responsibilities, which ensured both their hard work under contract and their return home to their country of origin. Here, Spanish officials were drawing on particular notions of privatized motherhood, which assume that women are tied to family responsibilities and emotionally attached to children such that they would be unlikely to risk permanent or long-term separation from home and hearth (for more on the notion of privatized motherhood, see Nakano Glenn et al., 1993).

The targeting of women with children comes into sharp focus when we consider the case of Morocco. In 2004, the city of Cartaya received a \$1.6 million grant from the EU-sponsoring agency AENEAS to develop a circular migration program between Spain and Morocco that had 'co-development' features (Gerson, 2007b; Martin, 2008a). 'Co-development' features refer to those program features that are aimed at enhancing economic development in the migrant's country of origin and ensuring the migrant's return to their country of origin (Martin, 2008a). In its first two years, the program was a colossal failure; fewer than half of the Moroccan guest workers returned to Morocco at the end of the work contract (Martin, 2008a, p. 20). The problem of non-return prompted an important change in the program, namely *only* mothers under 40 with children in Morocco could participate (Gerson, 2007b; Martin, 2008a).⁹ It is a little unclear who came up with this strategy, though at least one Huelva official and all three union representatives we interviewed insisted that it was the Moroccan government. Regardless, some 26 000 Moroccan mothers applied for the program and 5,500 were selected in 2007. As one strawberry grower remarked 'We are looking for women with family responsibilities, so that when they finish their work and collect their money they will want to go back to see their family, their children' (Gerson, 2007b).

For their part, the migrant women interviewed understood clearly why they were being targeted as guest workers. They had heard that the guest-worker program had been open to all Moroccans, but that Moroccans had not been returning, thus the requirement that the workers be mothers. In order to submit an application, the women were required to show documents indicating the ages of their children. The migrant women themselves reinforced the case for recruiting migrant mothers. Men, they argued, sit around too much and are more likely to complain, whereas women, and mothers in particular, are more hard-working and less likely to talk back to the boss. Though they were all mothers, the women were an otherwise diverse group. Their ages ranged from 26 to 42. About half were married and half were divorced. The number of children they had ranged from one to eight, though five of the eight women had only one to two kids. The majority of the women was from rural areas and had worked in agriculture before participating in Spain's strawberry harvest,

thought at least two were from towns. Almost all of the women left their children in the care of their parents while they traveled to Spain to work. And most were using the money to build houses in Morocco.

When asked whether they had ever considered not returning to Morocco at the end of their employment contract, the women insisted that they had no incentive to do so. Though they knew of other Moroccan workers that had chosen not to return, these workers ended up working as undocumented workers for less than minimum wage. The women had seen that by returning, they would be given preference for rehiring the following year. And by having temporary work permits, they would earn the minimum wage and enjoy basic labor rights. Though the women mentioned missing their children, especially since most of these women were on nine month contracts and had been coming to Spain for well over three years, it was not their family responsibilities that convinced them to return. Rather, it was the fragile promise that they would be able to earn money each year in Spain. Regardless of the mechanism making these women compliant guest workers, the targeting of women with children appears to be resolving the issue of non-return. In 2007, more than 90% of the workers returned to Morocco at the end of their contract. The approach of targeting migrant mothers has been considered a resounding success and an example of 'ethical migration' by Cartaya's mayor, Juan Millán (Gerson, 2007b).

The centrality of motherhood to notions of the ideal worker in this case is noteworthy. Though the literature had examined how women have been constructed as an ideal global work-force, few studies have found mothers to be a target of global labor recruitment. Certainly, motherhood has figured prominently in narratives of women's international migration. But in most cases, it has been constructed as an *obstacle* to women's migration. Women are expected to take care of households and families, remaining literally in the home to do so. Their departure to work outside the home or, worse yet, outside the country, is taken as a transgression of traditional gender norms and the ideal of privatized mothering. Thus, employers, the state, and women themselves must go to great lengths to facilitate women's labor mobility and construct their work in gender-appropriate and respectable ways (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Parreñas, 2001). The discourses that endorse women's work and outmigration – what Oishi (2005) refers to as social legitimacy – typically emerge as countries are brought into the fold of the global economy and experience a feminization of labor. Social legitimacy is an important determinant of large-scale female outmigration (Oishi, 2005).

It is also the case that motherhood and the cultural ideals thereof can help discipline a feminized work-force. In Lee's (1998) analysis of factory production in China, one factory exploited women's roles as wives and mothers to increase managerial control. Referring to the 'matron workers' employed in the plant, Lee (1998, p. 158) notes that 'their children's well-being and needs anchored women in a constrained working mother's life, and their children's future justified the hardships it brought'. Preibisch and Encalada (2010) find a similar situation among the Mexican women recruited to work as guest workers in Canada: 'Women frequently spoke of their migration as a sacrifice that could create alternative futures for their children by providing the education they never had' (2010, p. 300). In the case of Moroccan migrant mothers in Spain, the possibility of returning each year to earn money for their families was enough to convince them to comply with the labor-intensive work regime and the conditions of the labor contract. Thus, in this case and others, women's ties to families and children may help discipline them into being obedient migrant

workers. And motherhood may be construed by employers and state officials as a basis for, rather than an obstacle to global labor recruitment.

Conclusion

In Sassen's (1998) view, globalization makes national borders economically *meaningless* but politically *meaningful*.¹⁰ Goods, money, and people move across national borders in greater numbers, but political life remains organized around national political bodies, borders, and identities. Labor mobility in particular inspires anxiety in host societies about labor competition, ethnic diversity, and increased crime. Against the real or imagined threat of immigrants, national constituencies push for a tightening of 'porous' borders and protection from the 'flood' of immigrants from the global South (Sassen, 1998; Parreñas, 2001). This is especially true in the rural communities that are now the destination for a new generation of migrant workers. The contradictory impulses of globalization – to transcend and reinforce borders – often lead to symbolic gestures by the state to control and/or restrict immigration. In the United States, for example, law-makers attempt to placate nationalist sentiments by militarizing borders, while turning a blind eye to the rampant use and abuse of immigrant workers (Massey, 2003).

A more comprehensive solution to the immigration 'problem', according to Massey (2003) and others (Castles, 2006; Martin, 2008a), is a guest-worker approach that would accommodate the needs of businesses searching for low-wage workers, communities searching for secured borders, and migrants searching for a livelihood. Spain's guest-worker program offers a migration model that fits somewhere between closed militarized borders and open labor mobility. As a migration alternative, it has been watched closely by policy-makers on both sides of the Atlantic. By restricting immigrant entry to these guest-worker programs, Spain has attempted to control its undocumented population and ease the social anxieties that undocumented migration begets. In some respects, this model is quite successful. Migrants have gained access to job opportunities abroad and they have sent money back home to help support families. Spanish growers, in turn, have enjoyed a steady supply of workers and Spanish officials have managed to ensure a good portion of these workers return home. But we have argued that the Huelva experience is successful in at least one other respect, namely in keeping migrant workers 'in their place'. By this, we mean that under the Huelva model, migrant workers are restricted to particular employers and to low-status jobs that resident workers reject; they are compelled to work hard through the threat of their replacement by migrants of other nationalities; and they are encouraged to return home with the promise that they will receive another opportunity to earn money for their family. Thus, at the end of the employment contract, migrants go back to their country of origin, workers retreat as a reserve army of labor, and women disappear back into the home.

To the extent that the Huelva model institutionalizes a temporary, insecure form of work and harnesses a predominantly female labor force, it represents the feminization of labor in the starkest of ways. Though it is clear that most temporary migration programs draw explicitly on gender constructs (Martin, 2003), very few studies have examined temporary labor migration management through a gender lens. For example, in Basok's (2000) otherwise superb comparison of the US Bracero program and Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program, the gender of the worker is neither a key variable, nor a key mechanism through which states manage tempo-

rary migration and return. Likewise, Plewa's work on European guest-worker programs does not address the gendered nature of these programs (Plewa and Miller, 2005; Plewa, 2009). As we have shown with respect to the guest-worker agreements coming out of southern Spain, essentialist ideas about women's abilities and responsibilities help ensure that migrants will not stay in Spain and will not challenge low wages and bad working conditions. Gender, in this case, is crucial to how employers harness and discipline a temporary, migrant work-force. And motherhood, in particular, has become a basis for labor recruitment and control. It would be interesting to see if women migrants redefine motherhood over time and/or use it as a basis for protesting the decline in temporary work contracts and/or working conditions.

With the global recession, Spain's economy has slowed. In 2010, the unemployment rate was almost 19%, the highest in the EU (*Migration News*, 2010). Thus, in 2011, only 5,000 Moroccan women were contracted as guest workers and many of the migrant women interviewed complained of a lack of work. It is clear that Spain's current economic crisis has caused a decrease in the hiring of migrant workers. Even so, Spanish growers insisted that resident workers – even unemployed resident workers – would not take these jobs and that they would have to continue importing guest workers to sustain the agro-export industry. The mayor of Cartaya, Juan Millán, predicted that as soon as the economy picked back up, the numbers of guest workers would rebound. He also pointed to the looming fertility crisis in Europe and in Spain in particular, which will create a labor shortage regardless of the state of the economy. At a fertility rate that is below replacement, Spain will have to accept immigrant workers in some form or fashion. All the more reason, he argued, to promote a migration model that is not so much about keeping migrant workers out, as it is about (to use our own words) keeping them 'in their place'.

Notes

1. This is not to say that Canadian employers do not express preferences for women migrants in certain instances. For tasks like packing fruit and cutting flowers, women are seen by employers as having 'a finer, lighter touch' and more patience (Preibisch and Encalada, 2010, p. 302).
2. According to Martin (2003), twenty-first century guest-worker programs also have more goals and objectives. Their purpose is not simply to fix temporary labor shortages, but to reduce illegal migration in labor-importing countries and to encourage development in labor-exporting countries.
3. This policy changed in 1991, when Moroccans were required to have a visa to enter the country (Arango and Martin, 2003). One year later, Spain imposed a visa requirement on individuals from Latin America, as well.
4. More recently, Senegal has been added to this list. Note that bilateral migration agreements with Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania are no longer necessary since these countries are now part of the EU. As EU citizens, individuals from these countries may enter and exit Spain without restriction.
5. The majority of these immigrants were men, who tended to dominate Moroccan migration to Spain (Haas, 2009, p. 4).
6. See Ruhs and Anderson (2010) for an in-depth discussion of how labor shortages are defined and tackled through immigration policies.
7. This information was provided by the Mayor of Cartaya, Juan Millán, and Piotr Plewa, a Polish scholar who has studied this issue extensively.
8. There was also some indication that recruiters started targeting women from rural areas who had experience with agriculture. For example, the first wave of Polish women who arrived in Spain as guest workers tended to be from the industrialized western part of the country. Beginning in 2002, recruiters moved to the eastern part of the country, which is more agricultural.
9. We do not have figures for the composition of the Moroccan guest work-force before this time. As such, we cannot say what this guest work-force looked like previously in terms of gender, marital status, and family composition. We can only say that after this point, only women with children were targeted.

10. In using the term 'globalization', we recognize that this is contested concept in the social science literature. Our purpose in using the term is merely to showcase the argument made by Sassen (1998) that global labor mobility invokes contradictory responses. Since Sassen uses the term, we do so too.

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