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## Flores-González, Nilda, et. al. Immigrant women workers in the Neoliberal Age.

Linda M. Crawford PhD  
Salve Regina University, [crawforl@salve.edu](mailto:crawforl@salve.edu)

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**Flores-González, Nilda, et. al. *Immigrant women workers in the Neoliberal Age*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780252079115**

*Reviewed by Dr. Linda Crawford, Salve Regina University*

The authors of the introduction and first articles included in this collection, inspired by a 2008 gathering at the Ford Foundation, presume *a priori* that the reader agrees with their stance on undocumented workers in the U.S. and their right to not only human working conditions, but also to a path to citizenship. As such, they tend to focus on the anecdotal and the emotive, rather than data. It isn't until the middle of Maura Toro-Morns' article on the activist Elvira Arellano, for example, that the author admits that immigrating to the U.S. is just one way, not the only way, of reacting to the harsh effects of neoliberal economics on developing nations. Similarly, Lorena Muñoz's chapter "From Street Child Care to Drive-Throughs" ignores that market vending has typically been a woman's space in many of the Latin American countries where the women originated, and that the market space has traditionally blurred the lines between labor and reproductive labor. Several others, such as Fisher and Kang's "Reinventing Dirty Work", are really equally relevant to male workers in the care industry, perhaps even more so, as they discuss the personality required to do the job successfully and cultural stereotypes of manhood. The most interesting articles are those which present some telling data and ask some larger questions for future exploration. Chang's article, "This is What Human Trafficking Looks Like" is an indictment of what the authors feel is the U.S. government's choice to limit the focus of media attention on trafficking to the sex industry, while ignoring other forms of trafficking which benefit the government. Gurung and Purkayastha's article on Nepali women in pan-ethnic markets and Banerjee's article on South Asian women working in the U.S. show how these women are changing the patriarchal systems in which they grew up. Both articles present some fascinating data and zero in on visible changes in the trends: Gurung and Parkayastha's article demonstrates that women are not just following the men in immigrating, but rather are now initiating it. They are also proof that, with regard to child care, there is a tendency among South Asians to seek out Nepali women because they are similar in religion, culture and language. However, they also demonstrate that employers prefer to seek out those women who, beyond the shared culture, are also more educated and therefore, versatile, employees. Finally, this article points to another new trend, which is women sending money home not just to families, but to

build infrastructure in their home communities, thereby creating social status for themselves. Banerjee's article, "Paradoxes of Patriarchy", while not presenting the solid data of Gurung and Parkayastha, provides ethnographic evidence that women who work in the U.S. cause change in attitudes toward domestic labor, reproductive labor, and education for women in families where women traditionally did not work outside the home. In contrast to Muñoz's article on Latina street vendors in Los Angeles, Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo's article on "Living the Third Shift" discusses another trend which represents cultural change. Young women are now working at food carts in the streets of Los Angeles at night, a time when most young women would be at home, protected. The authors, upon initiating the study, had some thought-provoking data to work with: there simply weren't enough young men performing the same tasks to provide them with a diverse group of research subjects. In addition to studying the change in cultural norms involved with allowing young women out into the streets at night, the authors also focus on how the engendering of that workspace is used to create greater profits and how families negotiate the means of keeping them safe. Finally, there are several articles which describe how grassroots organizations have helped improve conditions for all immigrant workers, not just women, through "framing" or "spinning" the issues in particular language, through training, and through struggle. While not all the essays are limited to conditions and phenomena affecting only women, the volume presents some important work and some inroads into the study of the worldwide effects of neoliberalism.