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Outside the Imagined Community: Undocumented Settlers and Experiences of Incorporation

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outside the imagined community: undocumented settlers and experiences of incorporation

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The decade of the 1980s witnessed a dramatic increase in the volume of research undertaken on the international migration of undocumented people, particularly from Mexico to the United States. As a result of this flurry of interdisciplinary activity, we have discovered that many undocumented migrants may begin as temporary residents but eventually develop social linkages, cultural sentiments, and economic ties that influence them to continue living in their receiving communities (Chavez 1985, 1988; Piore 1986).[1] Rather than temporary residents, many become settlers who may or may not return to their country of origin. This phenomenon is not limited to the United States. European countries that once sought temporary guestworkers have found that a considerable number of migrants stay beyond the time limits of their contracts, establishing ethnic communities in their host societies (Heisler 1986; Hollifield 1986; Safran 1986). Countries in Central and South America have also experienced the long-term settlement of undocumented migrants (Marmora 1988; Murillo Castaño 1984; Palacio 1988).

This article examines the experiences of undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in the United States. Recent empirical research has increasingly focused on undocumented migrants as potential settlers in the United States. Many researchers before 1980, however, stressed that most undocumented Mexicans were temporary migrants. As recently as 1978, Cornelius emphasized that undocumented Mexican migrants were temporary visitors, "sojourners" rather than settlers. Similarly, Piore (1979) argued that the structure of the U.S. labor market was well matched to the temporary nature of Mexican migration. The "secondary" sector of the labor market offers low-paying, impermanent, often seasonal employment that citizens may shun but that is highly sought after by migrants, who return to Mexico after earning a targeted sum of money. Not surprisingly, Portes and Bach (1985:61) noted that "unlike legal immigration, undocumented [immigration] flows are usually temporary."

Research on undocumented immigrants in community settings in the United States helped to revise this rather narrow view of undocumented Mexican migrants as inherently, and almost by definition, temporary residents.[2] Basing their argument on the results of this new research, Cornelius (1981:30) and Piore (1986:24) emphasized that not all undocumented Mexican migrants return home after a brief stay in the United States. Some settle in U.S. communities.[3]

The notion of settlement draws our attention to a transition through which some undocumented migrants pass. It is this transition that must be examined if we are to understand the

This article argues that, because they accumulate economic and social linkages to U.S. society, many undocumented Mexican and Central American immigrants intend to stay in the United States and imagine themselves to be part of the community. However, because the larger society views them as outsiders, undocumented settlers cannot be fully incorporated into the larger society. They remain marginal members of the community, continually seeking an end to their liminal status. [undocumented immigrants, undocumented Mexicans, Central American migration, imagined communities, international migration]

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significance of what it means to be transformed from a migrant into a settler. The purpose of this article is to examine settlement as a process with countervailing, often contradictory, influences that both facilitate and inhibit the incorporation of undocumented immigrants into U.S. society.

settlement and incorporation into society

How can we begin to interpret the process of settlement that undocumented immigrants experience? In his classic work *Rites of Passage,* Arnold van Gennep (1960) underscored the importance of the transitions individuals undergo as they pass from group to group and from one social status to another. A person's life is marked by such transitional moments as birth, coming of age, marriage, beginning an occupation, and death. These moments are typically accompanied by rites or ceremonies that enable the individual to pass from one defined position or status to another. For undocumented migrants, crossing the border is a territorial passage that marks the transition from one way of life to another way of life. No matter how similar or familiar it may be, or how many relatives and friends await the new arrival, life in the United States is different from the life migrants leave behind.

A territorial passage is analogous to more conventional rites of passage in that it can be divided into three important phases: *separation* from the known social group or society, *transition* (or the "liminal" phase), and *incorporation* into the new social group or society. These phases are not always of equal weight or importance in a particular passage. As van Gennep noted,

> The length and intricacy of each stage through which foreigners and natives move toward each other vary with different peoples. The basic procedure is always the same, however, for either a company or an individual: they must stop, wait, go through a transitional period, enter, be incorporated. [1960:28]

Each phase raises important theoretical issues. Separation draws our attention to the reasons for undocumented migration. These reasons are at once personal, familial, and structural. Recent migration theory argues that the United States' position as a center of international capitalism and its dominant relationship with less powerful countries have created linkages or bridges across which political influence, capital, labor migrants, and politically displaced persons move (Sassen 1988). However, we must bear in mind that they move not between analytically distinct sending and receiving regions but *within* a broader system encompassing both units. Sending and receiving countries are part of an international economic system (Wolf 1982). As outlying regions in this system are penetrated by capitalism, their internal social and economic structures become unbalanced, eventually leading to migratory pressures (Portes and Bach 1985:6).

I am concerned here primarily with the phases of transition and incorporation. In most rites of passage, incorporation occurs when the participant acquires the appropriate knowledge, experiences, and behaviors and successfully completes the proper rituals. Territorial passages such as the ones undocumented immigrants experience also have their rituals of incorporation, such as the appointment at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) at which legal residency is conferred or the naturalization ceremony for new citizens. Such rituals, however, symbolically mark the culmination of efforts and experiences at one end of the passage. What about the experience itself? I suggest that by examining practical, everyday experiences, modes of behavior, and knowledge acquired by undocumented immigrants during their territorial passage, we can begin to understand the social and cultural changes associated with this transition, as well as the problem of the undocumented immigrant's incorporation into the larger society.

The case of undocumented immigrants in San Diego suggests that for some the transition phase may begin with crossing the border and never come to a close; these people are never able to accumulate enough linkages of incorporation—relatively secure employment, family formation, the establishment of credit, capital accumulation, a measure of competency in En-

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glish, and so forth—to allow them to become settlers and feel part of the new society. They remain "liminals," outsiders, during their stay in the United States, often returning to their country of origin after a relatively brief stay (Turner 1974). However, even individuals who have accumulated a great number of such linkages may find their full incorporation into the new society blocked because of their immigration status and the larger society's view of them as "outsiders."

In examining the obstacles to incorporation that undocumented immigrants encounter, I find Benedict Anderson's (1983) notion of "imagined communities" useful. Members of modern nations cannot possibly know all their fellow-members, and yet

> in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. . . . [The nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. [Anderson 1983:15–16]

The notion of imagined communities raises important questions concerning the incorporation of undocumented immigrants. Does the larger society "imagine" undocumented immigrants to be part of the community? And to what extent do undocumented settlers imagine themselves to be part of the larger community? To approach these questions, we must place the settlement of undocumented immigrants in a specific context, in this case, San Diego, California. Before presenting that context in greater detail, however, we must clarify the relationship between incorporation and settlement.

Settlement occurs as a result of experiences that serve to link undocumented immigrants to U.S. society. An undocumented settler, however, is not necessarily fully incorporated into the community. Incorporation occurs in stages, with undocumented immigrants who stay in the United States increasingly acquiring experiences, knowledge, and modes of behavior that tie them to U.S. society. Full incorporation depends not just on their own personal changes but also on the larger society's willingness to "imagine" them as members of the community.

At this point, let me introduce the San Diego setting, which will allow me to expand on the significance of the larger society's views of undocumented immigrants. I will then give a brief overview of research methods particular to the study of undocumented immigrants, followed by an examination of the experiences and attitudes of undocumented immigrants in San Diego.

the setting

"It's another beautiful day in paradise" is the refrain radio deejays and television newscasters commonly use when referring to San Diego. San Diegans are proud of their mild climate, miles of beaches, and nearby mountains and deserts. Added to this has been a relatively prosperous local economy based on a mixture of tourism, the aerospace industry, computer-related businesses, and agriculture.

San Diego's population is diverse, with blacks, Asians, and Chicanos, or Mexican Americans, making up more than a quarter of San Diego County's population. Latinos, or individuals of Spanish origin as designated by the Census Bureau, are the largest group, accounting for 14.8 percent of the population. Among Latinos, persons of Mexican origin are the largest single group, or 12 percent of the county's population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1984:VI, 1206). In addition, about 50,000 undocumented immigrants were counted in the 1980 census, of which about 34,000 (68 percent) were from Mexico (Passel 1985:18). The rest of the undocumented population includes increasing numbers of people from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

I use the term "undocumented immigrants" here when speaking of individuals who have crossed the border clandestinely, without permission from the INS, and who reside in the United States. Undocumented immigrants themselves use terms such as *"pollos"* (chickens), *"indocumentados"* (undocumenteds), *"ilegales"* (illegals), and *"mojados"* (wetbacks), most of

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which echo English words. I believe that "undocumented immigrant" is the most nearly neutral of these terms, simply referring to immigrants without documents from the INS, which is why I prefer the term. The other terms have other connotations. Describing oneself and others as *pollos* symbolically posits defenselessness and vulnerability. The metaphor becomes symmetrical when one considers that the name for the person who guides undocumented immigrants across the border is "*coyote.*" Coyotes, of course, are the natural antagonist of chickens, on whom they prey.

The term "illegal alien," though popular, is imprecise. The legality of undocumented immigrants' presence in the United States is best determined by an immigration judge, and is therefore not something on which I wish to make, or even imply, a judgment. Moreover, some immigrants find the term offensive. As one immigrant woman at a public hearing said, "Aliens are from outer space!" The term "wetback" is also inaccurate. It was popularized in Texas, where illegal border-crossers typically wade across the Rio Grande, thus arriving wet. But most of the undocumented immigrants in San Diego cross over the hills and arrive dusty and tired, but not wet. Moreover, terms such as "illegal alien" and "wetback" are not merely descriptive; they carry with them negative connotations and messages that speak to underlying perceptions about who is an outsider to society, who is a member of the community, and, ultimately, who is an "American." (Although I recognize that everyone living on the American continents can lay claim to being an American, I use "American" here to mean a member of U.S. society, which corresponds to its meaning as a folk term in American English.)

San Diego County begins at the U.S.-Mexico border and ends some 55 miles later, north of the city of Oceanside. For the purposes at hand, the county can be divided into three sections: north, central, and south. One encounters higher densities of Mexican-origin people the farther south one travels in the county.

The context must also be set from another perspective. The moment undocumented immigrants illegally cross the U.S.-Mexico border they enter a "liminal" space, a place that is "betwixt and between" categories in a number of senses (Turner 1974; van Gennep 1960). This liminal space begins at the very border itself. For example, one of the most popular places to cross the border is known as the Soccer Field or Cañon Zapata, located about 15 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. A broad plateau on which people often play soccer while they wait for night to fall, it extends north from the border and is actually in the United States. The only clue to the existence of the border, however, is the fact that the houses on the Mexican side come to an abrupt stop. At this location, neither a fence nor a demarcation of any other kind separates the two countries. Although the Soccer Field is on the U.S. side of the border, it has served as a staging ground for thousands of people waiting for their chance to cross the border. It was the unofficial port of entry into the United States throughout the time of my fieldwork.

The Soccer Field is a place of geographic liminality. Although technically in the United States, it is an ambiguous place that lies betwixt and between the United States and Mexico. Migrants use it as a place to gather and wait for the right moment to try to migrate north. Even though they are standing on U.S. sovereign territory, the people at the Soccer Field have not officially entered the United States. The Border Patrol watches what goes on in the Soccer Field but makes little attempt to assert control over the area. People seem to understand implicitly that the Soccer Field is neutral ground. As such, it is reminiscent of a time when politically independent communities were separated by a zone of uncontested terrain over which no one had control. The Soccer Field, metaphorically speaking, stands between the domestic and the foreign from the perspective of people on both sides of the border.

Migrants also find themselves in an ambiguous space when they leave their natal country and enter a territory, particularly in areas of the U.S. Southwest such as San Diego, where they encounter friends, relatives, and a prevalence of the Spanish language. To Mexicans, San Diego is a territory that is foreign and familiar at the same time. Finally, San Diego itself is betwixt and between borders. Bounded to the south by the international border with Mexico, San Diego is

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bounded to the north by the San Clemente (in the west) and Temecula (in the east) immigration checkpoints. These northern checkpoints are extensions of the international border and as such are meant to capture any undocumented immigrants who have made it safely into San Diego but are trying to reach economic opportunities or relatives somewhere else in the United States. For many undocumented residents of San Diego, the northern immigration checkpoints symbolize all of the constraints on their lives. Undocumented immigrants frequently told me that because of their illegal status they were not free to enjoy life, often citing as an example the fact that they were unable to take their children to Disneyland because of the immigration checkpoint at San Clemente.

Despite a long history of Mexican immigration into the region (Alvarez 1987), the presence of undocumented immigrants in the San Diego area has generated its share of controversy. San Diegans are, at best, ambivalent about undocumented immigrants and, at worst, openly hostile. Representatives of the San Diego Police Department have characterized undocumented immigrants as criminals:

> These new criminals are undocumented aliens from Mexico, some of whom live here but many of whom sleep in their native land and cross daily into the United States to commit their crimes. At the end of their workday, they go back into Mexico with a few dollars to show for their efforts. [quoted in Gorman 1986]

A member of the County Board of Supervisors has blamed undocumented immigrants for the county's budgetary problems, and at one point proposed suing the federal government for $23 million she claimed the county had spent on jail costs, health care, and court costs for undocumented immigrants (Reza 1986). Such public denouncements fan the public's fear of undocumented immigrants.

Local solutions to the perceived problem have also tended to be directed at the emotions of local citizens, as a flurry of suggestions to the local media in 1986 indicates. The controversy began with San Diego's sheriff calling for the Marines to be stationed every 15 or 20 feet, day and night, along the border (Meyer 1986). One of California's U.S. senators, who had once been the mayor of San Diego, said he would support this proposal if the border situation deteriorated and immigration reform did not help the situation (Gandelman 1986). A local member of the House of Representatives followed with a suggestion that the National Guard be stationed at the border, which he believed would be a politically palatable alternative to calling in the Marines (McDonnell 1986). The sheriff's rationale for the original proposal that set off this round of public debate on the "problem of illegal aliens" is illuminating:

> Illegal aliens are gradually affecting the quality of life as we know it. For example, now we have to admit illegal aliens into our colleges, which means my grandchild may not be granted entry because of an illegal alien and they'll probably require her to be bilingual. [quoted in Meyer 1986]

The northern part of the county has been the site of particularly strong emotions concerning the presence of undocumented immigrants. This area has undergone rapid growth, changing practically overnight from open land and farms to suburban development. Accompanying this growth has been an increased polarization based on income and ethnicity, as the following description of the area suggests:

> Northern San Diego County is today a land unlike any other along the U.S.-Mexico border, . . . a place where squalid, plywood-and-cardboard shacks sit in the shadow of $1-million mansions, where the BMW and Volvo set rubs elbows at the supermarket with the dusty migrants fresh from the fields, where the haves routinely run head-on into the have nots. [Bailey and Reza 1988]

With such rapid changes have come mounting tensions between those who live in houses, condominiums, and apartments, and migrant workers, who live in makeshift campsites and stand on busy streets waiting for offers to work. These tensions erupt periodically, as when it was feared that migrant workers were about to cause a malaria epidemic (Dawsey 1988) or when migrant workers were accused of extorting lunch money from schoolchildren (San Diego Union 1986). A candidate for the County Board of Supervisors in 1986 conveyed these themes using images of war, disease, and disaster:

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> Nowhere else in San Diego County do you find the huge gangs of illegal aliens that line our streets, shake down our schoolchildren, spread diseases like malaria, and roam our neighborhoods looking for work or homes to rob. We are under siege in North County, and we have been deserted by those whose job it is to protect us from this flood of illegal aliens. [quoted in Weintraub 1986]

These and other fears sometimes give way to expressions of violence. For example, there have been cases in which unidentified men have driven by in trucks and used sticks to club fieldhands walking along the street; on one occasion a Mexican fieldworker waiting for a bus was shot in the back, paralyzing him from the waist down; and on another occasion a Mixtec Indian from Oaxaca was tied up, beaten, and left with his head covered with a paper bag bearing the message *"no mas aqui"* (*sic;* "no more here") (Freedman 1990).

Undocumented immigrants, that is, are not generally regarded as members of the community; they are society's "Others," who, as Michel Foucault (1970:xxiv) notes, "for a given culture, [are] at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcize their interior danger)." As a consequence, the larger society often endows the identity, character, and behavior of the illegal alien with mythic qualities. And, like most mythicization, this helps justify and give meaning to the social and economic order. The larger society's beliefs and attitudes concerning undocumented immigrants are an expression of what Antonio Gramsci calls hegemony:

> the permeation throughout civil society . . . of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs, morality, etc. that is in one way or another supportive of the established order and the class interests that dominate it. . . . To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalized by the broad masses, it becomes part of "common sense." [Greer 1982, quoted in Martin 1987:23]

The "common sense" view of undocumented immigrants stresses their transience, so affirming their ostensible lack of commitment to the community's well-being. As "illegal aliens" they are not legitimate members of the community. The "illegal" component of this term underscores the fact that they exist outside the "legal" system that constitutes society. "Alien" is synonymous with "outsider," "foreigner," and "stranger." As criminals, or potential criminals, they exist outside the laws that govern the behavior of lawful citizens. In short, the undocumented immigrant's image consists of a conglomeration of negative values and missing qualities (even "*un*documented" stresses the *lack of* documentation).

The hegemonic beliefs and attitudes that define "illegal aliens" must be taken into account when one is considering the immigrants' incorporation into society. Although undocumented immigrants may settle in U.S. communities, their incorporation into the life of the larger society does not depend solely on their own actions and perceptions. A society that is unwilling to "imagine" undocumented settlers as part of the existing society places limits on their incorporation. Undocumented immigrants are, for example, the targets of state policies that limit, or attempt to limit, their participation in state programs such as health care, education, and housing (Rumbaut, Chavez, Moser, Pickwell, and Wishik 1988; Chavez 1986, 1988). The state also attempts to limit their ability to work. Agents of the INS raid places where undocumented immigrants are suspected of working, and Congress passes laws that make it illegal to hire undocumented workers (Chavez, Flores, and Lopez-Garza 1990; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives 1986). Even when not working, undocumented immigrants face the constant threat of apprehension and actual physical removal from the country (Chavez and Flores 1988; Chavez, Flores, and Lopez-Garza 1989). The state makes it very clear that undocumented immigrants are unwelcome, actively seeking to restrict their economic opportunities and discourage their continued presence in the country.

At the same time, undocumented workers are part of the local economy. Employers view undocumented laborers as dependable and hardworking, and some industries have come to rely on their labor (Cornelius 1988). Obviously, the larger society harbors complex and contradictory attitudes about undocumented immigrants. In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said points out how such oppositions can form part of the image a society creates of the "Other." Said argues, as Jackson (1989:150) notes, that the "relationship between East and West is not

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a purely imaginative relation, but one that is based on very real material foundations, including the history of French, British and American imperialism." Like the West's ideas about the East, the larger society's views of "illegal aliens" are not myths merely in the sense that they may be false. The generally negative, but also contradictory, views of undocumented immigrants serve a purpose; they obscure the undocumented immigrants' contributions to the economic well-being of the communities in which they settle.

Consequently, undocumented immigrants exist as marginal persons, as outsiders. Why, then, do undocumented immigrants settle in an environment with such obvious obstacles to their full incorporation? And do they themselves ever feel a part of the community?

research among the undocumented

In 1986 I began research to try to understand why some undocumented immigrants settled in the United States rather than returning home after a brief sojourn as the literature suggested they did. By this time, I had already been engaged in research among the undocumented in San Diego since 1980. It was my long-term commitment to the area that, I believe, allowed me to conduct the present research. Over the years, I had taken seriously my responsibility to provide the local community with information about my research and to respond to requests for analysis of general immigration issues, which had meant numerous speaking engagements for social service organizations and community groups. I had also participated in outreach activities undertaken by local community coalitions and organizations serving the interests of the undocumented community. When I began the current project I found that, because of these activities, many individuals and organizations were willing to provide me with invaluable assistance.

Research among undocumented immigrants entails a number of methodological decisions. My experience suggested that long-term fieldwork with one family, or in one apartment complex or one neighborhood, would not capture the variation in lifestyles among undocumented immigrants. I decided that the best strategy would be to interview undocumented immigrants living in various places and to use multiple methodologies. During the summer of 1986, I, along with some research assistants, interviewed close to 300 undocumented immigrants in the San Diego area. During and after that time, I personally conducted scores of in-depth, unstructured interviews with undocumented immigrants living throughout the county.

All of the interviews were conducted in Spanish in the safety of the interviewee's home or in a location where the interviewee felt comfortable. Before each interview we carefully explained the purpose of the research and the precautions taken to protect the informant. In order to ensure anonymity, the interviewees' names, addresses, and phone numbers were not recorded. The interviews averaged an hour in duration, but two-hour interviews were not uncommon; if the interviewee enjoyed talking, the interview would take even longer.

Structured interviews followed a set schedule, combining closed questions, to which the answers are anticipated, with open-ended ones. Most closed questions were followed by an open-ended question that would give the interviewee an opportunity to explain his or her answer. (A typical open-ended question was "Why do you believe that?") Responses to open-ended questions were recorded verbatim, which resulted in a large amount of qualitative data. This method provided for a much greater depth of understanding to be brought to bear on the responses than would a standard survey.

Informal interviews with undocumented immigrants did not follow a schedule, but covered similar questions and were tape-recorded when possible. Many informal discussions also took place in completely social situations in which I participated. These interviews and discussions provided me with additional ethnographic information to be used in gauging the reliability of the responses in the structured interviews.

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Undocumented interviewees were found using a "snowball" sampling technique (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Cornelius 1982). This technique uses the informant's own kinship and friendship networks as the basis for drawing a sample. A number of initial contacts are made with as many undocumented immigrants as possible, and these people are then interviewed and asked to introduce the interviewer to a relative or friend who might be willing to participate in the study. This method, although time-consuming, helps to develop a measure of rapport, since contact is made through an established and trusted personal relation.

Because snowball sampling is based on social networks, it tends to produce a sample biased toward individuals who have lived in the United States for a relatively long time. I did not view this inherent bias as a detriment, since a key objective of my research was to examine the factors leading to settlement in the United States. In line with this objective, interviewees had to have lived in the United States for at least one and a half years to participate in the survey.[4] Informal interviews included more recent arrivals.

Although I did not live with the informants, I found that after an interview session I was emotionally drained. The interviewees openly shared their lives and their experiences with me. Each was stamped with its particular nuance and individual importance. My experience was similar to that of Emily Martin, who noted:

> Doing a study based on interviews meant that I gave up the rich, multilayered texture of life that I would have experienced by living in a community or with a family. I tried to make up for that by participating in as many ongoing organizations as possible. . . . All of us doing interviews often felt swept away by them—either exhilarated or cast down—and the emotional effects lingered, as if we had had the most profound events of someone else's life shoehorned into our own. [1987:9]

Of the 296 undocumented immigrants surveyed, about half (49.8 percent) were from Mexico and about half from the Central American countries of El Salvador (31.8 percent), Honduras (8.3 percent), Nicaragua (5.2 percent), Guatemala (3.8 percent), and Costa Rica (1 percent). There were 109 female interviewees, of whom 58 were from Mexico. Mexican interviewees had a median age of 30, Central Americans of 33. Mexicans had been in the United States a median of four years, Central Americans of three. Mexicans and Central Americans alike had a median of seven years of education, or one year beyond elementary school.[5]

undocumented immigrants in San Diego

Undocumented immigrants in the San Diego area are diverse in terms of their backgrounds, how long they have resided in the United States, and the conditions in which they live (Chavez 1990). At one extreme are the farmworkers and nursery workers whose makeshift shelters, often consisting of nothing more than a plastic-lined hole in the ground, can be found in canyons and on hillsides on or near the land they work. These workers generally live in the northern part of the county.

In makeshift housing of plywood, cardboard, and plastic, individuals and even families also live in suburban areas and work as gardeners, landscapers, members of construction site cleanup crews, housecleaners, and the like. Typically, they are relatively recent arrivals in the United States. For example, Isabel García (a pseudonym, as are all names mentioned here) had been in the United States for one month and was living in a hillside campsite. As she said:

> I came here because there is no work over there [in Oaxaca]. Oaxaca has no factories, no large businesses to employ people. When you do find work, it's very difficult. You work from nine in the morning to nine at night for little pay and it's hard to find another job. I was told that there were good wages here and that there was plenty of work for women. Right now I do housekeeping, but sometimes I do that and sometimes I don't. It's not stable [work]. [unstructured interview conducted 1-15-89]

Outside of work, the migrants living in makeshift campsites interact little with the larger society, often confining themselves as much as possible to their campsites. Miguel Fuentes, who lives at the same campsite as Isabel, stands on the curb of a nearby street every morning hoping

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a passerby will offer him work. Like most of the other people living in the campsite, Miguel finds security in its relative isolation:

> I feel very happy here [in the campsite]. Since I have always lived here I don't know where else to go. I don't even like to go to the market because if I go out, right away it's back to Tijuana [because of apprehension by the authorities]. So we pass the time around here roaming around, enjoying the scenery. We can't do anything else. [unstructured interview 1-15-89]

At the other extreme are undocumented immigrants who have been in the United States for many years. They live in apartments and houses beside legal residents and citizens of the United States. Jorge Diaz, for instance, is a self-employed cement- and brick-layer who lives a comfortable working-class life. His apartment is on a busy street, where he parks a truck he uses for work and a late-model compact car he uses at other times. His apartment is furnished with a color television, a stereo, and pictures of his children, two of whom were born in the United States and are therefore U.S. citizens. Although still less than fluent, he can communicate with his English-speaking clients, with whom he deals on a one-to-one basis. After living in the United States continuously for 16 years, Jorge is comfortable with his life. Undocumented immigrants such as Jorge are virtually indistinguishable from the legal immigrants and citizens around them.

For Jorge, life as an undocumented immigrant presents problems, especially the inability to leave and enter the country freely. But he does not envision himself returning to live in Mexico. As he said:

> I feel I'm imprisoned because I can't go to Mexico to see my mother or my brothers and sisters. So I feel deprived. But if I were immigrated [a legal resident of the United States], I wouldn't go to Mexico to stay. On the contrary, I plan to establish roots here. I plan to buy a house. But if I were able to leave the country, in three hours, on a plane, I could go see my mother for a weekend and then be back here with my family. [unstructured interview 11-20-86]

Undocumented immigrants who become settlers often point to the differences between their current lives and their earlier experiences as temporary migrants or the lives of other relatively recently arrived migrants. Ramon Carrillo first came to the United States in 1974, when he was 30 years old and single. He followed a seasonal pattern of migration, leaving his hometown of Ibarra, Guanajuato, to work as a farmworker in San Diego for six months and then returning home for six months. His life during those early years in the United States was very similar to that of the temporary farmworkers discussed above.

In 1976, while back in Mexico, Ramon met Lupe, a young woman from San Felipe, Guanajuato, and they soon married. He continued his routine of temporary migration until 1978, at which point he brought his wife and six-month-old son to live here with him. Ramon reflected on the change this way:

> Actually, I had never thought about staying here in the United States. But when I worked here I would hear talk that there was a law that if you had a child here you could fix your status. I thought maybe we could do that, but I didn't take it seriously. And then the law changed and there is nothing now like it. But it didn't matter, we still stayed here to work. . . . You know how it is. One wants to improve the living standard and well-being of the family. Here it is much better than over there [in Mexico]. [unstructured interview 1-10-87]

Ramon's comment about his standard of living reflects the fact that he now has more appliances and other commodities than he did before migrating. It also reflects his view that economic opportunities in Mexico are limited and have been especially so since the economic downturn that began in 1982.

Ramon has worked for the same company during his entire stay in the United States and now has a position of responsibility overseeing production at one of the company's farms. His steady work has given his family—which now includes a son and daughter born in the United States—a sense of stability. With many years of experience in the United States, Ramon speaks in a way that gives one a sense of his confidence in dealing with U.S. culture. Unlike the seasonal farmworkers, he is not restricted to life within the boundaries of the farm:

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There are people who have suffered by not being able to go out. They have to buy food that is very expensive [from a lunch truck] or they don't have a lunch when they need one because they can't go out. They are afraid.

In contrast, Ramon and his family know their way around:

When we need something we go to Valley Center. Every Friday we go to Escondido to the store to get our groceries. We go to the swapmeet on Sundays and there is no problem. If we need something during the week we go to town.

Although Ramon and his family may feel comfortable moving about in the larger society, they still share with the temporary workers the possibility of being apprehended by the authorities. In February of 1986, Ramon and his family were driving to Texas to visit his wife's brother when they were stopped by the INS near Yuma, Arizona. At the time I interviewed them, they were involved in legal proceedings to determine whether they should be deported or allowed to continue living in the United States. If they won, they would receive a suspension of deportation and be allowed to stay; if they lost, they would have to leave the country.

linkages to U.S. society

Jorge and Ramon have decided to settle in the San Diego area even though they may have initially intended to stay only temporarily. They are not alone. As Figure 1 indicates, I found that undocumented immigrants with two years or less in the United States were likely to intend to return home.[6] Those who had lived here longer, however, intended to stay in the United States. This pattern held true for Mexicans, Central Americans who had not migrated for political reasons, and Central Americans who had migrated for political reasons. Interestingly, Mexicans generally seemed to take longer to decide they were going to stay in the United States than Central Americans, especially those who had migrated for political reasons. As might be expected, many politically motivated migrants had planned all along to stay in the United States. After a couple of years in the United States, a majority of all Central Americans intended to stay, compared to a minority of Mexicans. After four years in the United States, about two-thirds of both Mexicans and Central Americans intended to stay in the United States.

Jorge's and Ramon's cases suggest that changes in attitudes about staying are associated with increasing linkages to U.S. society, a pattern also suggested by the broader survey. One obvious linkage is work. Practically all interviewees were employed at the time of the interview (94.3 percent and 83.6 percent of Mexican men and women, respectively; 95.7 percent and 94.0 percent of Central American men and women, respectively). Conditions at the workplace can sometimes provide subtle incentives to stay, among them periodic increases in wages and the perception that a job is long-term rather than temporary. Employers wishing to avoid the disruption caused by a capable and trusted employee's absence sometimes overtly suggest settlement. Hector Gomez' experience is a case in point.

Hector first migrated to the United States in 1972, at the age of 26, leaving his pregnant wife and two children behind. For five years he migrated back and forth between work on an avocado farm in the north county and his family in Aguascalientes. During this time he had two more children. Hector lamented the emotional distance between himself and his children.

The first years, I was fine. But then the time came, after four years, that I would go to visit my family and my children didn't know me. I would try to hold them and they wouldn't allow it. They would cry. They weren't comfortable with me. I noticed that they didn't have any affection for me, nor I for them. [unstructured interview 3-19-87]

Despite these problems, Hector did not consider bringing his family to the United States. His work on the avocado farm earned him only about $1.50 an hour, and he did not have housing suitable for a family. His employer, however, kept insisting that Hector bring his family. Over the years, the employer, who did not live on the farm, gave Hector increasing responsibility for

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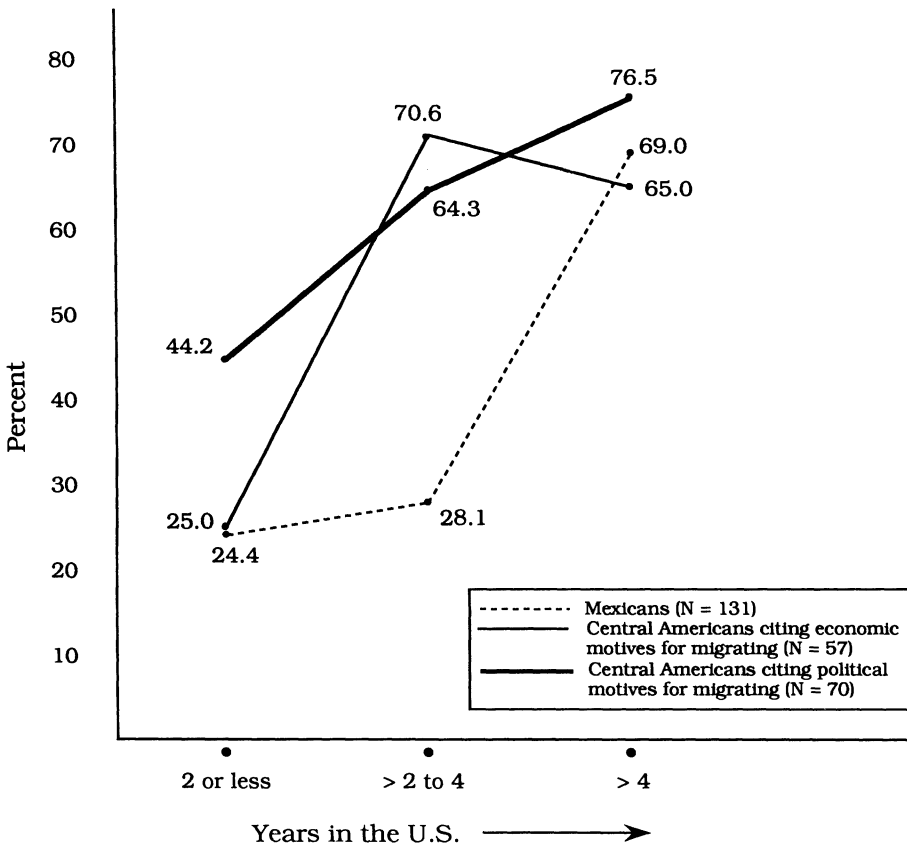

Figure 1. Percentages of undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in San Diego who intend to stay in the United States.

its day-to-day operations. Hector noted that when he suggested going back to see his family, the employer "didn't like it, because I was in charge of the trees. He said, 'I don't like it that you go so often. Look, send for your family.' "

Hector's employer continued to insist that Hector bring his family and stay permanently on the farm. After his pay was raised to $2.50 an hour, Hector finally decided to bring his family north. His employer's insistence that he not leave the avocado farm unattended and his sentiments for his family pushed him toward a major change: "I thought I must make a decision. It was very hard for me to continue living here alone. My family occupied my thoughts—when would I be able to see them on a continual basis?" In 1977, Hector returned to Aguascalientes and brought his family back with him to the avocado farm in San Diego.

The purchase of property also serves to link undocumented immigrants to U.S. society. Mexican interviewees (7.9 percent) were more likely than Central Americans (2.1 percent) to have bought homes. As Jorge Diaz said, "I have plans to buy a house. Anyone can buy a house. There are plenty of illegals who have homes. In Los Angeles I have cousins who are illegal, completely illegal like me. One of them works a lot and has bought two homes."

Undocumented immigrants also develop, or attempt to develop, many noneconomic linkages to U.S. society. For example, many interviewees had taken English classes since arriving in the United States (57.8 percent of Mexicans and 61.4 percent of Central Americans). De-

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veloping a linguistic linkage, however, is difficult. Fewer interviewees said they could speak English well enough to converse with a monolingual English speaker than had taken English classes.[7] Although many interviewees attempted to learn English, they had few opportunities to practice the language since they worked in places where most of their co-workers spoke Spanish.

Undocumented immigrants develop still other linkages to U.S. society, and the number of these linkages increases over time, as Table 1 indicates. I found that the more time immigrants had spent in the United States, the more likely they were to live there with their spouse and/or children. With time, they were also more likely to live in binational families—that is, families consisting both of undocumented immigrants and of children born in the United States who were therefore citizens (Chavez 1988)—and to have relatives living near them, although this was more true for Mexicans than for Central Americans. Their children rapidly become involved in U.S. culture (which includes Chicanos), a fact reflected in their increasing use of English when talking among themselves. Few believed their children wanted to return to the interviewee's native country, and this remained constant over time.

Federico Romero's case illustrates some of the familial dynamics that arise when undocumented children are raised in the United States from an early age. He migrated to San Diego in 1979, at the age of 25 (he was 33 at the time of the interview), leaving his wife and infant son in Mexico City and planning to return home when he had enough savings to start a business. Although at first he found it difficult to find permanent work, he eventually secured a good, long-term job in an electronics store. He knew some English before he arrived and learned more on the job, which eventually enabled him to move from menial work to sales, serving both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking customers.

Table 1. Noneconomic linkages to U.S. society over time for undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in San Diego.

Years in the United States	Mexicans			Central Americans who did not cite political reasons for migrating			Central Americans who cited political reasons for migrating		
	<3 %	≥3 %	Total %	<3 %	≥3 %	Total %	<3 %	≥3 %	Total %
Have spouse and/or children in United States[a]	37.5	57.9	53.0	55.6	71.0	65.3	40.6	80.8	58.6[c]
	(24)[b]	(76)	(100)	(18)	(31)	(49)	(32)	(26)	(58)
Have U.S.-born children	4.5	41.6	30.3[c]	0.0	42.1	25.4[c]	4.1	31.3	14.8[c]
	(44)	(101)	(145)	(25)	(38)	(63)	(49)	(32)	(81)
Have relatives who live nearby	38.5	63.2	56.0[c]	47.8	42.9	44.8	39.1	56.3	46.2
	(39)	(95)	(134)	(23)	(35)	(58)	(46)	(32)	(78)
Have children who speak English and Spanish with one another	12.5	54.0	48.3[d]	14.3	41.7	31.6[d]	26.7	47.6	38.9[d]
	(8)	(50)	(58)	(14)	(24)	(38)	(15)	(21)	(36)
Have children who do not want to return to parents' country	85.7	79.2	80.0	80.0	81.0	80.6	92.6	88.2	90.0
	(7)	(48)	(55)	(10)	(21)	(31)	(13)	(17)	(30)
Desire U. S. citizenship	7.7	31.3	24.4[d]	20.8	50.0	38.3	17.4	27.6	21.3
	(39)	(96)	(135)	(24)	(36)	(60)	(46)	(29)	(75)
Feel part of community	31.7	61.7	52.6[c]	45.8	73.7	62.9[d]	45.8	64.5	53.2
	(41)	(94)	(135)	(24)	(38)	(62)	(48)	(31)	(79)

[a]Includes only interviewees with spouse (including common law marriages) and/or children.
[b]Numbers in parentheses indicate the total number of responses to each question.
[c]X^2 significance level < .01. Chi-square (X^2) significance provided for changes between time categories. The null hypothesis in each case is that there is no relationship between the time variable and the other variable.
[d]X^2 significance level < .05.

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Federico's wife and son joined him after he had been in San Diego about ten months, even though he was initially opposed to the idea. Later, a daughter was born in San Diego, making her a U.S. citizen. Having his family in the United States has forced Federico to examine his future residence intentions. He realizes that his children have a different experience from his, which complicates all their lives. As we began to discuss his children, Federico lowered his voice. He said that his son (now eight years old) had come to the United States as a baby and did not know he was "illegal." Federico then said:

> Look, I have Mexican roots. I am a Mexican. You see that [American] flag over there [up on the wall next to a Mexican flag]? He asked me to buy it for him because he likes it; it's his American flag. He said, "Dad, I would like an American flag. I want my flag." If I were to take my son to Mexico someday he would see a different world. He doesn't even know Tijuana. So I see him in a different world. Like the story of the lioness of two worlds. They left the lioness in a different place where she didn't know how to defend herself. It would be like that; he doesn't know anything. [As for my daughter,] this is her country. She was born here. [unstructured interview 11-2-86]

Federico's work and his family have both contributed to his intentions to stay in the United States and try to legalize his immigration status. "Right now my ideas are very firm in that this country will be mine. In this country I will have what I have wanted most, that my children study, that my children become educated." That his undocumented son may face obstacles to obtaining an education, participating in government-sponsored programs, or working—obstacles that his U.S.-born daughter will not encounter—raises another set of issues found in such binational families.

Importantly, the longer undocumented immigrants reside in the United States, regardless of their motivations for migration and despite their lack of documentation, the stronger and more numerous their ties to it become. Recognizing the importance of time, experience, and social relationships (kin and friends) is central to understanding why some undocumented immigrants feel less isolated and more comfortable in their public movements than do other, more recent undocumented immigrants.

We must remember, however, that migration and settlement are selective. Most undocumented immigrants willingly return to their family and community in their native country after a few months to a year or so in the United States (Chavez 1988). Economic goals may have been sufficiently met or family responsibilities may have pressed for their return. They also may have returned as a result of the kinds of experiences that tend to disengage undocumented immigrants from, rather than link them to, U.S. society. Relatively recent arrivals are often subject to work-related abuses that may discourage them from staying here. Miguel (mentioned above) had an experience that is all too common among day laborers. He had worked for a number of days and been paid with a check, but the bank would not cash it, claiming the account had insufficient funds. Miguel returned to the employer and asked her to pay him in cash. She said the check was good, and apologized. "I didn't want apologies, I wanted my money," said Miguel. "And to date she still hasn't paid me. She owes me about $250, and I don't know what to do to get it from her. She doesn't want to pay me."

Women share with men this period of vulnerability during which they must learn what to expect in work situations and what not to tolerate. Julia was 18 years old when she left El Salvador and found her first job as a live-in maid in La Jolla, two years before she was interviewed. The family offered her $90 a week. Rather than pay her each week, they told her, they would save her money for her so that she would receive a large amount every so often. After six months, Julia asked for her money. According to Julia, the woman of the house said they were bankrupt and fired her. Her principal concern was that her loss meant that it would take her even longer to pay back the $1200 she had borrowed from her brother (who was already in the United States) to pay the *coyote* who had smuggled her into the country.

Many other examples could be suggested, but the point is clear. Undocumented immigrants, especially those without a formal contractual agreement, are vulnerable to job-related abuses. They are often desperate for work, especially just after their arrival, and have not yet learned

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how to avoid the worst situations or stop a negative situation before it continues too long. Such experiences may contribute to a decision to return home. Then again, worries about the dearth of economic opportunities and their physical safety back home may counterbalance the effects of bad experiences in the United States.[8]

reasons for staying and for returning

In order to have formed ties to U.S. society, interviewees had to have lived in the United States for an adequate period of time. Interviewees were asked why they had stayed in the United States as long as they had. Their most frequent responses to this open-ended question are summarized in Table 2. Undocumented Mexicans most often said they had stayed because they had become accustomed to life in the United States, thus implicitly acknowledging that they had undergone a process of change. They also said that they liked life in the United States, contrasting it with the relatively difficult life in Mexico. In addition, they cited the desire to continue working and to save money as well as the opportunities for on-the-job advancement and pay increases. These responses indicate the importance of both economic and noneconomic linkages to U.S. society in the decision to stay rather than return to Mexico.

Central Americans who did not cite political reasons for migrating stayed for reasons similar to those of Mexicans—because they wanted to work and save money and because they had become accustomed to life in the United States. They also cited the political situation in their homeland. Central Americans who had migrated for political reasons stayed in the United States to work and because political conditions prevented their return.

Interviewees were also asked to complete the sentence "I will return to my country only when. . . ." Table 3 lists the four most frequently cited responses. Mexicans said that they would return if apprehended by the INS, in order to deal with emergencies, if they had enough money, or in order to visit family. Central American migrants not citing political motives also most frequently said they would return if apprehended, mentioning in addition reasons such as emergencies, a change in the political situation that would make it safe for them to return, and a death in the family. Politically motivated migrants would return if the political situation

Table 2. Reasons for U.S. residence given by undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in San Diego.

Mexicans (*N*=131) %		Central Americans who did not cite political reasons for migrating (*N*=55) %		Central Americans who cited political reasons for migrating (*N*=68) %	
Accustomed to or like life in U.S.	23.7	To work	29.1	To work	20.6
To work	23.7	To save money	10.9	Political situation in the home country	17.6
To save money	15.3	Accustomed to or like life in U.S.	10.9	Hard/bad times in the home country	13.2
Opportunities to get ahead in U.S.	6.9	Afraid to return	7.3	To save money	8.8
Spouse in U.S.	6.9	Political situation in the home country	5.5	Accustomed to or like life in U.S.	7.4
All others	24.3	Opportunities to get ahead in U.S.	5.5	Opportunities to get ahead in U.S.	7.4
		All others	37.8	Afraid to return	5.9
				All others	19.1

Note: Interviewees were asked why they had stayed in the United States as long as they had.

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Table 3. Reasons why undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in San Diego would return to their country of origin.

Mexicans (N=138) %		Central Americans who did not cite political reasons for migrating (N=60) %		Central Americans who cited political reasons for migrating (N=81) %	
The INS catches me	28.6	The INS catches me	41.7	There is political/government change back home; it is safe; the war is over	30.9
There is an emergency	21.0	There is an emergency	20.0	The INS catches me	30.9
I have saved/earned enough money	8.7	There is political/government change back home; it is safe; the war is over	6.7	There is an emergency	24.7
I want to visit family	5.1	There is a death in the family	5.0	Working conditions improve back home	4.9
All others	36.6	All others	16.6	All others	8.6

Note: Interviewees were asked to complete the sentence "I will return to my country only when. . . ."

changed or if they were apprehended by the authorities. They would also return in cases of emergency and if there were an improvement in economic opportunities back home. The process of settlement is indicated by responses such as "becoming accustomed" to local life and work.

conflicts over settlement

Significantly, the process of settlement in U.S. society may foster discord within and among families. Adult immigrants encounter new cultural beliefs and experiences, and they sometimes resist change. Men, for example, often respond to U.S. society by attempting to assert even greater control over women than they did in their native society (Simon and Brettell 1986). But experience with U.S. culture can also lead to accommodations and challenges to past beliefs and behaviors. The experience of working for pay, the availability of labor-saving conveniences (piped-in water, laundromats), and the pervasive discourse on women's liberation, for example, often help to change immigrant women's ideas about gender relations (Pessar 1986). Men's emphasis on (and even exaggeration of) traditional gender roles, and women's move away from such roles, in turn, often lead to clashes and conflict. For instance, when I interviewed Alicia and her husband, both from Nicaragua, I asked if either spouse had changed since coming to this country. At first they were noncommittal, merely exchanging glances. Then Alicia said that her husband now wanted to control her and that he had not acted that way in Nicaragua. He responded that she now thought "like an American woman"—she wanted to be independent, to have control over the money she earned: "She wants her own bank account!" he exclaimed. As this exchange suggests, changes may not affect all individuals in a family or household at the same rate.

Moreover, some family members may wish to return to the country of origin, whereas others do not. As already mentioned, an overwhelming majority of interviewees believed that their children did not want to return to their parents' place of origin. In addition, among those surveyed, women (57.4 percent of Mexicans and 50 percent of Central Americans) were more likely than men (30.8 percent of Mexicans and 35.2 percent of Central Americans) to say that they were *not* returning to their country of origin. Negotiating such opposing views entails a playing out of domestic politics, a topic worthy of further research.

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personal incorporation into U.S. society

With more time in the United States and increasing ties to U.S. society, many undocumented immigrants begin to consider themselves part of the local community. Others, however, do not "imagine" themselves as part of the community. These contradictory positions are reflected in responses to questions about citizenship and the community. Only a minority of both Mexicans and Central Americans said they desired to become U.S. citizens, although there was a positive change over time (Table 1). On the other hand, a majority of both groups of undocumented immigrants said they felt themselves to be part of the community, with those who had lived here longest, once again, most likely to feel that way (Table 1).

The reasons interviewees gave for feeling, or not feeling, part of the community illustrate the conflicting experiences and perceptions found among undocumented immigrants. Most interviewees said that their undocumented immigration status was the reason they did not feel part of the community; they associated not having immigration papers with experiences of injustice and perceptions of exclusion. One Salvadoran man touched on a common theme when he said, "There is a lot of injustice against the illegal. I cannot belong to a country that rejects me." A Mexican man echoed this view when he said he felt alienated from the community "because they have the illegal very marginalized." Others mentioned the fact that their family was back in Mexico or Central America, and still others found cultural differences hard to transcend. As one Mexican man said, "I am only a worker and I don't want to adapt to the customs, because in Mexico I have my life."

Isolation from the larger society also played a role in whether or not interviewees considered themselves part of the community. As a Mexican woman said, "I live isolated from their way of life, and the memory of my Mexico doesn't leave me." A Nicaraguan man concurred: "I am very isolated. Rather, I believe I am part of the earth." Finally, some interviewees stressed their inability to communicate in English. As a Honduran man said, "I believe that to feel part of the American community one has to speak English."

These responses suggest the hesitation some undocumented immigrants feel about adopting American cultural values and becoming part of the local community. The reasons for this are complex, but they have to do in part with the immigrants' perception that their social and cultural life is centered back home. They also have to do with negative experiences and perceptions of discrimination, both personal and institutional. Experiencing social isolation and perceiving oneself as an outsider, Portes and Bach (1985) suggest, lead to increased ethnic identification among immigrants.

Interviewees who felt they were part of the community spoke of adapting to local life and becoming interested in local events. Their comments suggest that for undocumented immigrants, feeling themselves a part of the community is related to how well they have overcome feelings of isolation, developed a network of family and friends in the local community, acquired local cultural knowledge, and reconciled themselves to the possible threat of deportation. Undocumented immigrants often described these changes in terms of adaptation. A Mexican man put it this way: "I have adapted to the society. I am concerned about the community. I am interested in things that happen in this city, in this country." For a Nicaraguan woman, it was only a matter of time: "With time I have become accustomed to the way of life and to the people."

Others stressed their work and compliance with the law (that is, their good citizenship), which entitled them to be part of the community. As a Mexican man said, "Since I have been here I have contributed to the community by paying taxes and so I am part of the community." Or as a Salvadoran man said, "I pay taxes, I shop in the stores, I eat in restaurants, I am part of the community." For others, feeling themselves to be part of the community had to do with the presence of family and friends. Some interviewees, finally, felt part of the community because

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they had "paid their dues" through their experiences. As a Salvadoran woman said, "Because of all the abuse I have suffered since I arrived, I feel I am of this community."

As these examples suggest, even undocumented immigrants who consider themselves part of the local community harbor conflicting, sometimes contradictory, attitudes about their position. Some believe that negative experiences have reinforced their "right" to consider themselves part of the community. Others give evidence of their political awareness, emphasizing a relationship between community membership and their economic contribution as workers, consumers, and taxpayers. In short, undocumented immigrants may acquire linkages over time, and some may begin to feel part of the local community, but they do so not as passive agents. Rather, they are critically aware of their social status and its implications.

incorporation, settlement, and life back home

Feeling increasingly tied to the larger society does not necessarily mean severing ties with family and friends back home. Undocumented settlers often continue to send money to their parents or other relatives, even though the amount may be less and the intervals less regular after family formation or reunification in the United States.[9] Established settlers also assist newly migrated family and friends by providing a place to live, job referrals, and knowledge about the local culture. Settlers keep abreast of events back home through letters, phone calls, and messages passed along by recent migrants. And although undocumented settlers, particularly women and children, may be reluctant to return because of the risks involved in crossing the border illegally, they are ready to do so in the case of emergencies, as the responses above indicate. In short, undocumented settlers retain emotional ties to family and friends back home, and they yearn for legal status, which would allow them the freedom to cross the border regularly.

The foregoing analysis also suggests that a settler is conceptually distinct from a "long-term resident." The latter can be defined by arbitrarily assigning a cut-off date that determines long-term residency. Despite the usefulness of such dates for statistical analysis, they do not capture the complexity of the settlement process, and they exclude the notion of incorporation entirely. Furthermore, using cut-off dates in this fashion creates a false dichotomy between migrants and settlers, when in actuality we should be concerned about the influences on an individual's or a family's decision to stay in a new country or return to the old one.[10]

Moreover, the term "settler" does not necessarily translate as "permanent resident." I would argue that settlement does not occur according to a neat time schedule, nor is it necessarily a linear process. An individual may become a settler as a result of experiences that foster his or her incorporation into society, and yet ultimately return to the country of origin. Some undocumented immigrants I have interviewed have wanted to stay permanently in the United States since the day they arrived. Some who insist that they will return to their country of origin, even if they manage to obtain legal residence, may find that the economic and social ties binding them to U.S. society are too great to break. Others continually debate whether they will stay or not. Indeed, the ability to remain in a country without official documentation can depend on how well an individual is able to develop resources based on social organization (such as social networks) and work (stable employment, savings, and so on).

conclusion

Undocumented immigrants experience a territorial passage. They separate themselves from their known world and enter a stage of transition when they cross the border into the United States. Many, such as the temporary workers living in isolated, makeshift encampments, find it

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difficult to feel any ties to the larger society other than temporary work relationships. They remain liminals, outsiders, during their entire stay in the United States.

This points to a major difference between territorial passages and conventional rites of passage. In ceremonies marking a transition between social categories, such as a ritual marking the transition from childhood to adulthood, there is every likelihood that the participants will be incorporated into the new category or given the new status. Those who make a territorial passage are not assured that their transition period will come to an end and that they will be fully incorporated into the new society.

One can question whether or not a receiving society will ever imagine undocumented immigrants, or any immigrants for that matter, as part of the community. Whatever the answer to such a question may be, it should not undermine the insights gained from viewing undocumented immigrants as participants in a territorial passage. By focusing our attention on the experiences of undocumented immigrants in a stage of transition, we begin to understand why some relatively powerless people are transformed from sojourners to settlers in a new, sometimes hostile and threatening society.

Despite lacking a guarantee of full incorporation, over time undocumented immigrants develop the kinds of links to the local economy and society that are essential to the settlement process. Experiences such as finding a job, finding steady employment, acquiring on-the-job responsibility, forming a family, giving birth to children in the United States, raising children who attend U.S. schools and acquire local culture, learning to navigate in the larger society, and, ultimately, perhaps legalizing their immigration status, reflect the formation of linkages that begin to incorporate undocumented immigrants into the new society. Moreover, establishing a network of friends and relatives, some of whom may be from the same community of origin, increases sentiments of solidarity with the new society. These factors begin to counterbalance the forces encouraging return to the country of origin, and are, I believe, the reason why many undocumented immigrants defiantly assert their intention to stay and be a part of the local community despite their immigration status. Through such desires and behaviors they are, in essence, refuting the dominant, or hegemonic, ideology, which characterizes them as transient outsiders. This is not surprising since, as Scott (1985:317) notes, "hegemony ignores the extent to which most subordinate classes are able, on the basis of their daily material experience, to penetrate and demystify the prevailing ideology."

As a consequence of their experiences and the time they have spent in the United States, undocumented settlers often feel part of the communities in which they live. But even if they do imagine themselves as community members, their full incorporation depends not on their own beliefs or actions but, ultimately, on the larger society's perception of undocumented settlers. And contrary to Anderson's (1983:16) assertion that the nation is always a "deep horizontal comradeship," the larger society in San Diego does not readily perceive undocumented immigrants as part of the community. Until the larger society imagines them as part of the community, they will remain marginal; they will be outsiders continually seeking an end to their liminal status.

notes

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[1]Based on 1980 census data, Passel and Woodrow (1984) estimate that between 200,000 and 300,000 undocumented immigrants are added to the United States population each year.

[2]For community-based studies of undocumented immigrants see Baca and Bryan (1980), Browning and Rodríguez (1982), Cardenas and Flores (1980), Chavez (1985, 1988), Chavez and Flores (1988), Cornelius

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(1981), Massey, Alarcón, Durand, and González (1987), Melville (1978), Montes Mozo and García Vásquez (1988), Papademetriou and DiMarzio (1986), Pessar (1986), Rodríguez (1987), and Simon and DeLey (1984).

[3]This new wave of research emphasized the studying of undocumented immigrants in community settings in the United States rather than the collecting of interviews from individuals at the INS's detention centers or in Mexico (Bustamante 1977; García y Griego 1980; North and Houstoun 1976; Ranney and Kossoudji 1984; Reichert 1981; Reichert and Massey 1979). Studies set in detention centers and in Mexico tend to represent migration as temporary or cyclical.

[4]Owing to the limitations of the sampling procedure, substantive findings may be applicable only to this specific sample. Any statistical tests presented here must be viewed as useful guidelines only, given that the sample was not drawn randomly. Despite such limitations, I believe that the data examined here contribute important information on otherwise clandestine populations.

[5]The years of schooling included time spent at technical training schools and any formal schooling in the United States, except English-as-a-Second-Language courses. The median of seven years of schooling found here is similar to that of the undocumented immigrants legalized in California under the legalization programs established by the 1986 immigration law. The persons newly legalized under the general legalization program (who had to have been in the United States before 1982 and of whom 78 percent were Mexicans, 10 percent Salvadorans, and 4 percent Guatemalans) had a median of six years of school in their native country (CASAS 1989:ch. 2, 2). Those newly legalized under the Special Agricultural Workers program (most of whom arrived in 1984 or later, and of whom 91 percent were Mexicans, 2 percent Salvadorans, and 2 percent Guatemalans) had a median of seven years of schooling (CASAS 1989:ch. 2, 2).

[6]The total number of responses in a given figure or table is often less than the total number of interviews. Interviewees were not pressured to answer questions they were uncomfortable with, and sometimes they did not know the answers to particular questions. The tables and figure are made up of only the cases with usable responses on the specific variables.

[7]Forty-three percent of the Mexicans and 37 percent of the Central Americans said they could speak English well enough to converse with someone who did not understand Spanish.

[8]Although it takes us beyond the limits of this article, I should mention that economic and political conditions "back home" are also constructed, at least in part, by local interests, for whom continued remittances of emigrants' dollars and the exile of potential political dissidents are certainly of great value.

[9]For example, among the interviewees, 80.5 percent of Mexicans ($N = 41$) and 84.1 percent of Central Americans ($N = 69$) who had been in the United States less than three years sent money back home, whereas 62.8 percent of Mexicans ($N = 78$) and 80.3 percent of Central Americans ($N = 66$) who had been here three years or longer did so.

[10]The U.S. Congress encountered the same problem when trying to determine which undocumented immigrants should be allowed to qualify for the general legalization program established under the 1986 immigration law (Chavez, Flores, and Lopez-Garza 1990). Congress's solution was to set an arbitrary cutoff date, 1 January 1982, so that those who had arrived before that date were considered potential settlers, eligible for legalization, while those who had come after that date were considered temporary migrants who should return to their country of origin.

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