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The Power of the Imagined Community: The Settlement of Undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in the United States

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## The Power of the Imagined Community: The Settlement of Undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in the United States

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*Using logistic regression, this article tests the relative importance of the “imagined community” on the intentions of undocumented immigrants to stay in the United States. The argument is that, everything else being equal, imagining oneself as part of a local community is a powerful influence on settlement. If, for whatever reason, an undocumented immigrant comes to this self-perception, then he or she is likely to desire to stay in the community. The results clearly underscore the importance of feeling part of the community. Not only is the influence on the dependent variable statistically significant, but the odds ratio indicates that those who feel part of the local community are almost four times (Mexicans) or almost five times (Central Americans) as likely to intend to stay permanently in the United States as those who do not.*

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C ONTEMPORARY, LARGE-SCALE HUMAN MIGRATIONS across national borders have affected every continent on the planet. Not surprisingly, anthropologists have sought to understand the significance of these movements for notions of community, nationalism, and identity. Anderson’s (1983) notion of the “imagined community” has received particular attention in recent literature. The purposes of this article are to examine contemporary notions of community in relation to international migration; to suggest ethnographically how undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in the group studied perceive their relationships to the communities in which they live; and finally, to test, using logistic regression, the relative importance of the imagined community on the intentions of undocumented immigrants to stay in the United States.

The settlement of undocumented immigrants in the United States is of broad academic and public interest (Piore 1986).<sup>1</sup> Popularly called “illegal aliens,” these undocumented immigrants to the United States often stay for relatively brief periods of time. Some, however, do settle and add to the existing population. Because undocumented immigrants are a clandestine population, making accurate estimates of their numbers is problematic. Despite these difficulties, some reasonable assessments of the number who settle in the United States are available.

The number of undocumented immigrants who settle permanently in the United States, rather than staying for a short time and then returning home, appears to be about the same at the end of the 1980s as it was at the beginning. Based on the 1980 Census, Passel and Woodrow (1984) estimated that between 200,000 and 300,000 undocumented immigrants settled in the United States each year. Later, they examined data from the Current Population Survey and estimated that, during the late 1980s, about 200,000 undocumented immigrants settled annually in the United States (Woodrow and Passel 1990:57). The similarity between the two estimates suggests that the monumental 1986 immigration law (the Immigration Reform and Control Act), which was designed to stem the flow of undocumented immigrants, had little effect on the number who settle in the United States each year (U.S. House of Representatives 1986).<sup>2</sup>

Studies among Latin American immigrants to the United States suggest that settlement is influenced by a number of factors, including length of stay in the United States, family formation, network development, work, and changing gender roles (Browning and Rodriguez 1982; Chavez 1985, 1988; Chavez, Flores, and Lopez-Garza 1990; Lamphere 1987; Marmora 1988; Massey 1987; Massey et al. 1987; Melville 1978; Montes and Garcia Vasquez 1988; Papademetriou and DiMarzio 1986; Pessar 1982, 1986; Rodriguez 1987). Less attention has been paid to how perceiving themselves to be part of a local community influences immigrants' desire to stay in that community. The argument made here is that, in addition to the factors typically used to explain settlement, imagining oneself as part of a local community also has a powerful influence on settlement. If, for whatever reason, an undocumented immigrant comes to this self-perception, then he or she is likely to desire to stay in the community.<sup>3</sup> These assertions are tested below. But first, what directions have anthropological notions of community taken that help us to understand international migration?

### Notions of Community and International Migration

Classical theorists wrestled with the notion of community, particularly the forces that hold together complex societies. For Marx (1967[1867]), the community or society was the arena within which interest groups, defined by their relationship to the means of production, competed. History was tantamount to the struggle for power among these interest groups or classes, and society was in a constant state of tension as a result of the competition. For Durkheim (1984[1893]), on the other hand, complex societies developed their solidarity precisely because of the division of labor within their social and economic systems. The mutual interdependence of individuals meant they had to rely on the skills and abilities of others in the society, which increased social solidarity and cohesion. For Weber (1978[1947]), the community or society was the locus of expanding bureaucratic power in place of decreasing individual autonomy. But for Weber (1978[1947]:40), "community" itself refers simply to "a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together," which Brow (1990:1) argues combines both a feeling of solidarity and an understanding of shared identity.

Whether or not we emphasize class conflict, solidarity, or bureaucratic power, or even accept that all three play some role in understanding communities, community members have something in common: they share membership in the corporate group. Early anthropological work on tribal societies, the "classic" ethnographies of Malinowski (1961[1922]), Evans-Pritchard (1972[1940]), and others, were concerned with issues of social solidarity and village life, social structure, and organization. Tribal, lineage, and clan memberships were of paramount interest. It was Redfield (1956) who, while perhaps not the first anthropologist to examine the concept of community, nevertheless brought the notion of the "little community" into full anthropological gaze.

Redfield was particularly suited to channel attention to communities, rather than tribes or lineages, because of his interest in the lives of peasants in a class-stratified society and his relationship to the Chicago "School of Sociology," where Robert Park, Louis Wirth, and their colleagues raised questions about the nature of urban life. Redfield chose as his task to understand not life in large, heterogeneous urban centers but life in "little communities" characterized by their "distinctiveness, smallness, homogeneity, and all-providing self-sufficiency" (Redfield 1956:4). In the type of little communities Redfield was interested in, community membership was a given, something "felt by everyone who is brought up in it and as a part of it" (Redfield 1956:10). Because the intellectual territory he staked out was the polar opposite of that focused on by his sociological colleagues in Chicago, Redfield was less concerned with the contested nature of community membership in more heterogeneous communities. The theoretical issues concerning community membership raised by the Chicago sociologists, however, have also influenced contemporary anthropology.

Park and his colleagues raised fundamental questions concerning community membership and social marginality. Park's work on "migration and the marginal man" focused on the question of community membership, and he emphasized two points of interest here. First, "Migration as a social phenomenon must be studied not merely in its grosser effects, as manifested in changes in custom and in the mores, but it may be envisaged in its subjective aspects as manifested in the changed type of personality which it produces" (Park 1969[1928]:136). Second, Park, building on the work of Georg Simmel, viewed migrants as "strangers" who enter into a new community, where their experiences change them. Moreover, "The stranger stays, but he is not settled. He is a potential wanderer" (Park 1969:137).

Following Park, Siu (1987[1953]) examined the lives of Chinese immigrants in Chicago in the 1930s. He delineated the concept of the "sojourner" as a way to understand the personal struggles immigrants engage in as they constantly reevaluate whether to stay in their new communities or return to their communities of origin. The tension between the two choices forces immigrants to reflect on their personal goals, the circumstances of their lives, their family values and social relationships, and how the larger society perceives them. The sojourner, for Siu, is the immigrant who maintains an orientation to the home country. He or she has little contact with the larger society and lives for the moment of return migration. In contrast, settlers were those whose orientation had shifted from their places of origin to their new communities. Even if they ultimately desired to return to their places of origin late in life, or to be buried there after death, settlers went about the business of establishing their lives in their new communities.

Since the 1950s, the notion of community has become one of those all-encompassing concepts in anthropology. "Community studies" are driven by the idea, dating back to Redfield, that we can understand communities in holistic terms (Arensberg and Kimball 1965). The subfield of urban anthropology, drawing on both Redfield and the Chicago School, has produced a wealth of interesting research on communities around the world (Hannerz 1980). The exposition of this vast array of research would take us well beyond the purposes of this discussion.

Suffice it to say that despite all the work that has been carried out on communities, the question still remains: What underlies a sense of community? Anderson (1983) examined this question and suggested that communities are "imagined." Members of modern nations cannot possibly know all their fellow-members, and yet "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. . . . It 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). In this view, members of a community internalize an image of the community not as a group of anomic individuals but as interconnected members who share equally in their fundamental membership in the community. The internalization of the image and a sense of connectedness to the community is as important as actual physical presence in the community.

Such a view allows for a redefinition of *community*. Since it is imagined, a sense of community is not limited to a specific geographic locale (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Immigrants are said to live in "binational communities" (Baca and Bryan 1980), "extended communities" (Whiteford 1979), "transnational communities" in "hyper-space" (Rouse 1991), and "transnational families" (Chavez 1992). These concepts highlight the connections migrants maintain with life in their home communities; living dislocated on the other side of a political border does not necessarily mean withdrawing from community life or membership.

As accurate as these characterizations may be, we must be careful to also capture the changes migrants experience as a result of life in a new community. By overemphasizing migrants' linkages to their home communities, we run the risk of underemphasizing the changes they undergo and the linkages, both perceived and material, that they

develop to their new communities. Mobile people are less fixed and static than one would think from the image often presented in anthropological research. They change geographic locations, change identities, and defy limited characterizations of which communities they belong to. As Appadurai (1991:193) has noted, the contemporary landscape consists of deterritorialized “ethnoscapes” in which “the homeland is partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups.” Gupta and Ferguson (1992) make this point well in “Beyond ‘Culture’”:

But today, the rapidly expanding and quickening mobility of people combines with the refusal of cultural products and practices to “stay put” to give a profound sense of loss of territorial roots, of an erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of places, and of ferment in anthropological theory. The apparent deterritorialization of identity that accompanies such processes has made Clifford’s question (1988:275) a key one for recent anthropological inquiry: “What does it mean, at the end of the twentieth century, to speak . . . of a ‘native land’? What processes rather than essences are involved in present experiences of cultural identity?” [1992:9]

Their point is also well taken in regard to the concept of community. A migrant is not limited to membership in one community; sentiments and connections for one community do not categorically restrict feelings of membership in another. The desire for discrete categories of community membership is a product of academic needs, I suspect, rather than the ambiguous, changing, and pragmatic perceptions of migrants themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Anthropologists—and others examining international labor migration—who do not appreciate the ability of migrants to develop feelings of belonging to multiple communities run the risk of over-emphasizing the view that migrants can maintain allegiance to only one community, the community of origin. This point is perhaps best made through example. Although many examples exist, a recent example was presented by Rouse (1991), who carried out ethnographic research among immigrants from the Mexican community of Aguililla living in Redwood City, California. In developing the notion of “transnational communities,” Rouse presents a novel challenge to spatial images, highlighting the social nature of postmodern space. He points out that members of a “transnational migrant circuit” can be part of two communities simultaneously. However, he argues that migration is “principally a circular process in which people remain oriented to the places from which they have come.” In other words, Rouse posits that Mexican immigrants in the United States are essentially “sojourners,” using Siu’s conceptualization.

Rouse’s argument stands on the following points. First, “various factors have discouraged most Mexicans from staying permanently [in the United States]. In the case of Aguilillans, their cultural emphasis on creating and maintaining independent operations has led them to have deep-seated reservations about many aspects of life in the United States, prominent among them the obligation of proletarian workers to submit to the constant regulation of supervisors and the clock” (1991:13). As a result, he argues, Mexican immigrants “send their children back to Mexico to complete their education” (1991:14).

Unfortunately, Rouse presents very little supporting evidence for these arguments. For example, it is not clear how many Mexicans he interviewed and what proportion actually sent their children back to Mexico for education. That this is probably not a widespread phenomenon is suggested by the large numbers of Mexican immigrant children in public schools in California and elsewhere.

Rouse’s argument that Mexican immigrants send their children to Mexico for education reinforces the perception that Mexican immigrant families are sojourners, and because of their orientation “back home” they remain perpetual outsiders. Although his argument is couched in the discourse of contemporary theory, Rouse’s characterization of Mexican immigrants is not new. Rather, the idea that Mexicans are tied to their families and communities in Mexico, that they are “homing pigeons” who

have no desire to become “real” members of U.S. society, has had wide currency for most of this century. For example, this view was clearly and explicitly expressed by the 1911 Dillingham Commission on immigration issues, where it was argued that Mexicans made for the ideal labor force because of their supposed “homing pigeon” mentality (Portes and Bach 1985:80). And yet, many Mexican immigrants did stay and settle in the United States during the first two decades of this century.

Moreover, while much contemporary Mexican migration is circular, as Rouse and others assert, many Mexican migrants, including undocumented immigrants, do settle in the United States, as the data provided above suggest. And while many Mexican immigrants retain ties with their home families and communities, this does not necessarily undermine their experiences in their new communities, experiences that may isolate them from the larger society or lead to a change, sometimes well thought out and other times unconscious, in their orientation from sojourners to settlers. Because of various experiences, some immigrants may even develop feelings of belonging to their local communities, which does not necessarily imply a loss of sentiment for a geographically distant community.

Ultimately, to generalize from interviews with some members of one community that Mexican immigrants remain static in orientation because they retain significant linkages to their home communities is not convincing. And yet, such conclusions follow from an initial assumption that immigrants cannot develop a sense of belonging to more than one community.

In contrast to such a restricted notion of community membership, I would assert that undocumented immigrants can have multiple senses of community membership. In particular, I argue that undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans can, and often do, develop social linkages, cultural sentiments, and economic ties that result in many of them imagining themselves to be part of their communities in the United States (Chavez 1991). And interestingly enough, this imagined belonging does not necessarily include a profound sense of shared identity with the larger society; the imagined community is not Redfield’s “little community.”

### **Undocumented Immigrants and American Society**

Immigration tests the limits of Anderson’s notion of the imagined community. Immigrants, as newcomers to a community and society, may not readily be imagined to be part of the community by those already living there, nor is shared identity necessarily extended to them. In fact, they are often viewed as outsiders, strangers, aliens, and even a threat to the well-being of the community and larger society. Undocumented immigrants, in particular, are often characterized as a drain on public resources (health, education, welfare, police, etc.), as displacing citizen workers from jobs, and as having a deteriorative affect on American culture (Chavez 1986; Cornelius 1980). The comments of the exgovernor of Colorado, Richard Lamm, and Gary Imhoff are illustrative of such views:

At today’s massive levels, immigration has major negative consequences—economic, social, and demographic—that overwhelm its advantages. . . . To solve the immigration crisis, we Americans have to face our limitations. We have to face the necessity of passing laws to restrict immigration and the necessity of enforcing those laws. If we fail to do so, we shall leave a legacy of strife, violence, and joblessness to our children. [Lamm and Imhoff 1985:3]

As an issue of concern for the American public, immigration rarely goes cold; rather, it simmers most of the time and boils over occasionally, typically around periods of economic downturn (Simon 1985). In 1992, the “immigration problem” was hot. In a time of entrenched economic recession and rising unemployment rates, as well as a presidential election year, it is not surprising that Americans were asked to “rethink immigration” (Brimelow 1992). Not only was it suggested that we again take steps to

limit immigration but the underlying desire was for many of those already here, especially undocumented immigrants, to return to their countries of origin.

Blaming immigrants for many of our social problems has contributed to anti-immigrant positions. In California, the governor blamed immigrants for the state's economic problems, fueling public sentiment "to narrow the gates to the Golden State" (Reinhold 1991:A1). At the national level, Pat Buchanan, a 1992 Republican presidential candidate, regularly cited immigration as one of our biggest problems (*Newsweek* 1992:33). In particular, Buchanan has warned that undocumented immigration puts the United States at risk of "not being a nation anymore" (Jehl 1992:A1). Such rhetoric resembles past anti-immigrant discourse, which placed immigration high on the list of threats to national security (Cornelius 1980).

Some pundits have also blamed Latin American immigrants for the riots that ravaged Los Angeles after the acquittal of the police officers accused of beating Rodney King. As two columnists in the *Los Angeles Times* argued:

Weary conservatives and liberals have no shortage of explanations for the devastating Los Angeles riots. Yet a major factor has escaped serious discussion. It is immigration, currently running at unprecedented levels, that exacerbates the economic and social forces behind the riots. [Graham and Beck 1992:B11]

On the other hand, recent events suggest that Mexico and Central America may be on the precipice of a period of relative stabilization and economic growth. Mexico's gross domestic product (GNP) reached its highest level in ten years in the first quarter of 1992, and investment in Mexico is on the upswing, a pattern sure to be given even greater impetus as a result of the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (El Financiero 1992:1). One of the implicit arguments for NAFTA is the possible affect it would have on keeping Mexicans in Mexico and luring Mexicans emigrants back home.

In El Salvador, the government and rebel forces have reached a historic agreement to work toward peace. Nicaragua and Guatemala have experienced democratic elections. Although it is perhaps too early to predict a genuine period of peace and stability in the region, changes are occurring that may reduce the pressures for out-migration as well as the barriers to possible return migration. As one scholar has noted: "Hundreds of thousands of migrants—some refugees, some illegally abroad, and some now with resident status elsewhere—will be seeking to return to their home countries [in Central America] as the strife of the 1980s gives way to genuine peace in the 1990s" (Palmer 1992; see also Diaz-Briquets 1989).

The predictive validity of these views is dubious. However, the perspectives of both those who would like to see undocumented immigrants leave and those who believe conditions "back home" will lure undocumented immigrants into returning miss an important factor: undocumented immigrants themselves may view things differently. Even though they may have emigrated for specific economic or political reasons, neither of which may have entailed settling, their perceptions are subject to change.

Let me provide an example of what I am asserting. I raised this issue of return migration at a meeting a Salvadoran community group called to discuss the options and strategies available to Salvadorans who had applied for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) once the original TPS time period had terminated. After the meeting, I asked a Salvadoran who had been in Southern California for about seven years if he thought the peace negotiations would mean that he and others would be returning to El Salvador. He replied, "I don't think so. We are here now. Too much has changed. Most of us will stay."

His response underscored the issue of concern here: What can we learn from the experiences of undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in the United States that will help us to understand why some might chose to settle in this country rather than return to their countries of origin?



### Research among Undocumented Immigrants

The research reported on here focused on the San Diego area, where the economy is based on a mixture of tourism, the aerospace industry, computer-related businesses, and agriculture. Latinos, or individuals of Spanish origin as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau, accounted for 14.8 percent of the county's 1.8 million inhabitants in 1980 and 20 percent of the 2,498,016 inhabitants in 1990. Among Latinos, persons of Mexican origin were the largest single group, comprising 12 percent of the population in 1980 and 17.4 percent in 1990. The 1990 census counted 64,870 Latinos other than of Mexican descent, of which 9,062 were from Central America (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1984:6-1206, 1990, 1991). Of course, these figures do not include those who were missed by census-takers. About 50,000 undocumented immigrants were counted in the 1980 census, of which about 34,000 (68 percent) were from Mexico (Passel 1985:18).

During the summer of 1986, I, along with some research assistants, interviewed close to 300 undocumented immigrants in the San Diego area, about half of whom were from Central America. Interviews followed a set schedule, combining closed questions, for which answers are anticipated, with open-ended ones. Most closed questions were followed by open-ended questions 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 number 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.

For comparative purposes, the same structured interview was used in Dallas, Texas, with about three hundred interviewees, about half of them Mexican and half, Central American.<sup>5</sup> Dallas is comparable to San Diego in size and ethnic breakdown, and it too has experienced significant levels of immigration.<sup>6</sup>

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.

During and after 1986, I personally conducted scores of in-depth, unstructured interviews with undocumented immigrants living throughout San Diego county. 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 to the structured interview schedule.<sup>7</sup>

Because the clandestine nature of the population, which does not allow for the development of a known population from which to draw a random sample, 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, in as many different settings as possible. 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. Informal interviews included more recent arrivals.

As is the case with most anthropological samples that do not rely on a strict random sample, the methodology employed here allows for results that provide insight into this group of interviewees' perceptions and behaviors only. I do not claim to speak about undocumented immigrants in general. Any statistical tests presented here must be viewed as suggestive only—as hypothesis generating. Despite such limitations, I believe that the data examined here contribute important information on otherwise clandestine populations, and help to provide data against which other case studies can be compared.

### Characteristics of the Interviewees

In San Diego, 146 Mexicans and 92 Salvadorans were interviewed, as well as 24 Hondurans, 15 Nicaraguans, 11 Guatemalans, and 3 Costa Ricans. In Dallas, 154 Mexicans and 86 Salvadorans were interviewed, along with 47 Guatemalans, 6 Hondurans, 6 Nicaraguans, and 1 Costa Rican. In the tables that follow, Salvadorans are examined separately from the other Central Americans, who are lumped together because of their small numbers.

As Table 1 indicates, Mexicans in San Diego and Dallas were similar in age and education. Mexicans in Dallas, however, had been in the United States for a much longer period of time, and earned about fifty cents more an hour. Salvadorans and other Central Americans had similar socioeconomic characteristics, with little difference between those in San Diego and Dallas. Salvadorans in San Diego had a median of 8 years of schooling, compared to 6 for Salvadorans in Dallas, whereas other Central Americans had a median of 7 years in both places. Salvadorans and other Central Americans in Dallas had a median of 4 years in the United States, compared to 3 years and 2 years for Salvadorans and other Central Americans, respectively, in San Diego. The median age of Salvadorans in both San Diego and Dallas was 30 years, and that of other Central Americans in both places was similar. Central Americans in Dallas earned

**Table 1**  
Characteristics of interviewees.

Characteristic (median)	San Diego			Dallas		
	Mexicans (N= 146)	Salvadorans (N= 92)	Other Central Americans (N= 53)	Mexicans (N= 154)	Salvadorans (N= 86)	Other Central Americans (N= 60)
Age	30	30	36	33	30	35
Range	18–56	17–69	19–57	16–60	17–63	18–56
Years of schooling	7	8	7	6	6	7
Range	0–18	0–16	0–14	0–19	0–19	3–14
Years in U.S.	4	3	2	9	4	4
Range	1.5–30	1.5–16	1.5–11	1.5–20	2–13	1.5–10
Hourly wage (\$)	5.00	4.50	4.37	5.50	4.98	5.00
Range (\$)	2.00–15.00	2.50–8.70	1.50–11.40	3.35–12.00	2.00–8.50	2.50–11.00
Monthly family earnings <sup>a</sup> (\$)	1,031	1,072	1,000	1,186	900	1,013
% female interviewees	39.6	39.1	26.4	52.6	25.6	35.0

<sup>a</sup>Includes earnings of both spouses, if applicable.

slightly more than those in San Diego, but they had been in the country longer. Monthly family income includes the earnings of both spouses.

The growing interest in differences between politically motivated migrants and economically motivated migrants raises questions about the relationship between such motivations and residence intentions (Pedraza-Bailey 1985). Undocumented immigrants from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras living in San Diego migrated for many reasons, some of which sound similar to those of Mexican immigrants I have interviewed (Chavez 1988, 1991). Few Central Americans, however, had the long family histories of migration common to many Mexican immigrants (Chavez 1992).

Table 2 shows the proportion of Central Americans who mentioned political reasons for migrating to the United States. The question was open-ended, so they could respond in any way they desired. A person could cite more than one reason, but if at least one of the reasons for leaving was related to political conflict and turmoil then the person is listed here as having a political motive for migrating. Most of the Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans cited reasons for coming to the United States that included references to political turmoil their countries were experiencing.

Political motives among the undocumented Central Americans included a general fear that their lives were in danger. They were concerned about being caught in a political, and very real, cross fire. According to one Salvadoran woman, "There is much danger because of the rebels and the army." A Salvadoran man added, "Because of the conflicts in El Salvador, there's no respect for the life of others." Others linked the disruption of the economy with the political turmoil their countries were experiencing. The dangers inherent in the political conflicts caused some of the people I interviewed to feel a great deal of anxiety for their children's safety. And then, association with a political faction or the government placed some people in politically sensitive situations.

A note on indigenous groups in the sample: Oaxacan Indians often worked as temporary agricultural laborers in Northern San Diego County. However, network sampling is biased against such transient migrants, and they were not interviewed in this study. In earlier work, I have specifically targeted fieldworkers and interviewed Oaxacan Indians (Chavez 1992). Ethnic Guatemalan Indians have settled in Houston, but were not a significant part of the Latino population of Dallas (Rodriguez 1987). As a result, none of the interviewees in the sample discussed here indicated that they spoke an indigenous language at home in the United States. The interviewees were predominantly Mestizo members of their national cultures.

### Immigrants' Views of Belonging to the Local Community

Obviously, it is difficult to ask people if they imagine themselves to be part of a community. Anderson was trying to get at perceptions about community membership that are taken for granted, and yet reflect the notion of belonging to some social grouping "out there" that is intuitively known as the "community" and extending that

**Table 2**  
Central American interviewees citing political reasons for migrating.

Country of origin	San Diego		Dallas	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
El Salvador	92	65.2	86	60.5
Honduras	24	20.8	6	0
Nicaragua	15	60.0	6	83.3
Guatemala	11	54.5	47	6.4
Costa Rica	3	33.3	1	100.0
Total	145	55.9	146	41.8

sense of belonging to others who also belong. To try to elicit interviewees' perceptions in this area, we asked a number of questions about their relationships to their places of origin and to the United States, and whether they desire to return or stay. One question is particularly apt: Do you now feel like you are a part of the American (*Norteamericano*) community? We then asked them to explain their answers by asking them, Why do you think that? We left the definition of community intentionally vague, in order to allow interviewees to interpret its meaning.

Responses to this question (Table 3) indicated that, overall, more Mexican than Central American interviewees had begun to consider themselves part of their communities. Qualitative data reveal that undocumented immigrants had many reasons why they personally felt or did not feel themselves to be part of the community.

**Table 3**  
Frequencies on variables used in logistic regression.

Variable	Value	Mexicans (%)	Central Americans (%)
Intention to stay permanently in the United States			
Yes	0 =	34.5	53.6
No	1 =	65.5	46.4
Monthly family income <sup>a</sup>			
Less than \$800 a month	0 =	27.1	31.8
\$801–\$1,289 a month	1 =	35.0	36.1
\$1,290 or more a month	2 =	37.9	32.1
Education			
0 to 5 years of school	0 =	34.1	26.6
6 to 8 years of school	1 =	33.3	33.5
9 or more years of school	2 =	32.6	39.9
Years in the United States			
3 years or less	0 =	29.2	54.8
More than 3 years	1 =	70.8	45.2
Spouse and/or children in the United States			
No	0 =	45.0	54.3
Yes	1 =	55.0	45.7
Relatives live nearby			
No	0 =	33.2	42.2
Yes	1 =	66.8	57.8
Location			
Dallas	0 =	51.3	50.2
San Diego	1 =	48.7	49.8
Politically motivated migration			
No	0 =	NA	51.2
Yes	1 =	NA	48.8
Place of origin			
Other Central American country	0 =	NA	38.8
El Salvador	1 =	NA	61.2
Sex			
Male	0 =	53.7	68.0
Female	1 =	46.3	32.0
Feels part of the community			
No	0 =	39.7	52.1
Yes	1 =	60.3	47.9

<sup>a</sup>Includes earnings of both spouses, where applicable.

As for those who did not feel as though they were part of an American community, some mentioned that their families were back in Mexico or Central America. Others found cultural differences hard to transcend; their beliefs, behaviors, and languages kept them apart. Still others lived isolated and secluded from the larger society, and so believed they were not part of that society. Overall, however, the single most important reason why undocumented immigrants felt themselves to be outside their local communities was immigration status. As one Mexican immigrant, Hector Gomez (all names are pseudonyms), commented,

There's lots of discrimination against the illegal. That's one of the major things, because no matter where you are they call you "illegal" or "wetback." Wherever you go, at times you are humiliated because you are not legal. In all things you come last. Even our own race humiliates us.

On the other hand, many undocumented settlers felt that they were part of local communities. They spoke of adapting to local life and becoming interested in local events, as did this Mexican immigrant: "I have adapted to the society. I'm concerned about the community. I'm interested in things that happen in this city, 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." Feeling like you are part of the community appears to be related to overcoming feelings of isolation, developing a network of family and friends in the local community, acquiring local cultural knowledge, and reconciling yourself to the possible threat of deportation.

Once again, Hector Gomez serves as a good example of someone who became involved in community activities despite his undocumented status. He and his wife Felicia and their children attend church regularly and participate in many church-related social groups. Hector has also taken many self-improvement classes, for example, training to be an electrician. Not only have such activities provided him and his family an escape from the isolation of the avocado farm where they live and he works, but in his own estimation, he has grown from a rather timid rural person into someone who is not afraid to express himself, even with English-only speakers. Moreover, these activities have given them a sense of community, as Hector notes:

There's a lot of work to be done in the community. That's how the community grows. I like to participate a lot. We hardly ever miss a [church-related] meeting. We go every month, as sick or tired as we are we must go. So, I think I have a lot of help because I am conscientious and I'm constantly at our meetings, and that's what helps us. The doors are never closed to us. We have help when we need it and that's the advantage. Participate in whatever is in your community, work hard, and that's the point, so that we can have everything, friends, acquaintances, and there's the salvation.

The friends Hector and his family made through their community involvement proved instrumental in their long battle to stay in the United States. After being apprehended by the Immigration and Naturalization Service for a second time in 1980, Hector and his family faced a series of deportation deadlines. Each time a deadline arrived, the family received a reprieve as a result of the letters and petitions friends and church officials sent to the immigration authorities. After years of stalling deportation, the Gomez family's status finally became legal under the 1986 immigration law.

Some undocumented immigrants felt they had earned the right to feel part of the community; they had "paid their dues" in one form or another. As a fellow from Mexico said, "Since I have been here I have contributed to the community by paying taxes and so I am part of the community." A Salvadoran echoed this sentiment, "I pay taxes, I shop in the stores, I eat in restaurants. I am part of the community." A Salvadoran woman went even further when she said, "Because of all the abuse I have suffered since I arrived, I feel I am of this community." Jorge Diaz adds yet another perspective that helps us to understand why undocumented immigrants might feel part of the community:

I feel like part of the community. Of course, why shouldn't I? As Latinos we form a community within the United States. . . . Because of our roots, because there are Latinos who are legal, we communicate whether we are legal or illegal. Even among the Americans, we communicate with them at work and in the environment that we all live in.

The long history of Mexicans in the American Southwest and the presence of legal immigrants provide Jorge with a sense of community. And for Jorge, interacting with those around him helps him feel like he belongs.

Beatriz Valenzuela feels part of the community because she receives notices about community events. This makes her feel accounted for and considered by the community:

I do feel part of the community because when there are meetings here in the neighborhood, they send me a notice or an invitation, so that I will be able to attend those meetings. They always send me information on whatever programs there are. That's why I feel like part of the community.

Enrique, Beatriz's husband, also likes what he perceives as the government's general respect for the law. At the same time, both Beatriz and Enrique realize that their feeling that they are part of the community is somewhat illusory, and their situation could change dramatically if they were deported.

You may have something, but you have a lot of fear, too, because the whole time you think that they might take it away from us because we are not here legally in this country. So for us the [immigration] papers are the most important thing.

The Valenzuelas also were legalized several years after the 1986 immigration law went into effect.

Federico Romero emphasized the importance of friends in giving him a sense of community.

I've always felt like part of the community since I arrived in 1979, because I've had friends and relationships with a lot of people. I've always felt part of the community despite the fact that I have that fear that doesn't allow me to go out and develop in the way that I would like, that doesn't even permit me to take my children to Disneyland.

Although Federico feels part of the community, he, like many others, also includes the reality of his undocumented status that ultimately serves to undermine those personal feelings of belonging to the community. Undocumented immigrants are drawn into or increasingly incorporated into American society and culture through work, raising children who attend local schools and acquire local culture, and developing friendship networks. These experiences can lead to increasing feelings of being a part of the local community. But even if they do imagine themselves to be community members, their full incorporation into the larger society does not depend on their own beliefs or actions; it depends ultimately on the larger society's perception of undocumented immigrants. Federico Romero perceptively made this point:

To be treading on land that is not ours [is a problem], and we say that because at one time it was [ours], but that's past history. Now, legally, we are treading on territory that is not ours. Many people may believe we [Mexicans] are people without education and that we don't have an ability to develop better things, [but] we want, and hope, for an opportunity to show them that we can make it and that we don't need to depend on government aid in order to subsist and achieve what we want.

In sum, these qualitative data indicate that, over time, undocumented immigrants develop the kinds of ties to the local economy and society that result in their staying and settling in American communities. Experiences such as finding relatively 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 achieving legal immigration status begin to incorporate an undocumented immigrant 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 intentions to stay and be a part of their local communities despite their immigration statuses.

Let me add here that for these immigrants, feeling like part of their American communities does not translate as severing ties to their home communities; sentiments, social contacts, and economic relationships continue. For example, over half (56.2 percent) of the Mexicans who felt like part of their American communities continued to send money to their families in Mexico, as did most (84 percent) Central Americans who shared this view.

### Community and Settlement: A Testing of Hypotheses

How important are the factors that influence undocumented Central Americans to settle in the United States? Forming a family, working and earning money, having friends and relatives in the area, time, and political motivations are all factors that appear to influence settlement. Moreover, I hypothesize that once immigrants perceive themselves to be part of an American community, for whatever reason, they will be more likely to desire to stay in the United States. This means that despite the negative experiences, status, and harsh economic conditions, if immigrants perceive or imagine themselves to be part of an American community, their orientation will be not that of a sojourner but that of a settler.

A logistic regression was used to test the relative importance of some of the influences on settlement. Logistic regression is a particularly useful statistical technique for anthropologists since it allows dichotomous variables to be used as the dependent variable. Anthropologists often ask questions for which a scale does not exist and there is no quantity to measure, as there would be with, for example, earnings. We often have responses that can be categorized as yes or no answers, although they can also be elaborated on with the use of extensive qualitative data. With logistic regression we can take these basically qualitative variables and measure the influence of another variable or variables on them. When more than one variable is placed in the model as an independent variable, logistic regression measures the effect of one variable while holding the other variables constant, which helps to disentangle the relative affect of each of the variables in question.

A particularly appealing statistic that can be computed with this analysis is the odds ratio. The odds ratio suggests the odds of something happening to the dependent variable as a result of the independent variable. For example, say we had a variable that was defined as having two values, 0 = low income and 1 = high income, and we had another variable with the values 0 = males and 1 = females. With logistic regression we can derive a hypothetical odds ratio of 3.1, which means the females were a little over three times more likely than males to be in the high-income category. If the odds ratio were  $-3.1$ , then the females would be three times more likely than males to be in the low-income category.

The variables used in the logistic regressions of interest here and the summary statistics are presented in Table 3. The dependent variable is the intention to stay permanently in the United States.

The results of the logistic regression are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Model 1 includes all the variables except "feels part of the community." Model 2 includes "feels part of the community."

In Model 1, for undocumented Mexicans, income, education, and having relatives living nearby are not significant influences on intentions to stay permanently in the United States, at least when the other variables are held constant. Significantly, however,

**Table 4**  
**Logistic regression, undocumented Mexicans' intention to stay permanently in the United States as dependent variable.<sup>a</sup>**

	Model 1 <sup>b</sup>			Model 2 <sup>c</sup>		
	$\beta$	SE	OR	$\beta$	SE	OR
Monthly family salary						
Less than \$800						
\$801–\$1,289	.1712	(.4438)	1.1868	.0955	(.4709)	1.1002
\$1,290 or more	-.4534	(.5033)	.6354	-.6723	(.5274)	.5105
Education						
0–5 years						
6–8 years	-.6450	(.4185)	.5246	-.4347	(.4414)	.6455
9 years or more	-.1862	(.4285)	.8301	-.5082	(.4526)	.6016
Years in U.S.						
3 years or less						
More than 3 years	.7680*	(.3386)	2.1554	.7707*	(.3587)	2.1613
Spouse and/or children in U.S.						
No						
Yes	.9928*	(.4008)	2.6987	.8795*	(.4158)	2.4098
Relatives live nearby						
No						
Yes	.2963	(.3515)	1.3449	.3280	(.3765)	1.3882
Location						
Dallas						
San Diego	-1.2337***	(.3494)	.2912	-1.1696**	(.3715)	.3105
Politically motivated migration						
No						
Yes	NA					
Place of origin						
Other Central						
Amer. country						
El Salvador	NA					
Sex						
Male						
Female	.7114*	(.3412)	2.0368	.4924	(.3583)	1.6362
Feels part of the community						
No						
Yes				1.3471***	(.3694)	3.8464

<sup>a</sup> $\beta$  = Beta; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio.

<sup>b</sup>Summary statistics for Model 1: Model chi-square = 65.510 ( $p < .001$ ), degrees of freedom = 9, classification table = 76.17%,  $N = 235$ .

<sup>c</sup>For Model 2: Model chi-square = 76.518 ( $p < .001$ ), degrees of freedom = 10, classification table = 78.48%,  $N = 223$ .

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

those with more than three years in the United States were over twice as likely as those with less time to intend to stay in the United States. Having a spouse and/or child in the United States was also significant: the odds ratio indicated that those with a spouse or child were almost three times as likely to intend to stay as those without such family members with them. Mexican interviewees in Dallas were more likely than those in San Diego to intend to stay in the United States. This makes sense, given that Mexicans in



Table 5

Logistic regression, undocumented Central Americans' intention to stay permanently in the United States as dependent variable.<sup>a</sup>

	Model 1 <sup>b</sup>			Model 2 <sup>c</sup>		
	$\beta$	SE	OR	$\beta$	SE	OR
Monthly family salary						
Less than \$800						
\$801–\$1,289	.7265	(.3742)	2.0678	.5717	(.3393)	1.7713
\$1,290 or more	1.2760**	(.4481)	3.5822	.9495*	(.4631)	2.5845
Education						
0–5 years						
6–8 years	-.0543	(.3712)	.9472	-.2727	(.3982)	.7613
9 years or more	-.0461	(.3702)	.9550	-.3523	(.3983)	.7031
Years in U.S.						
3 years or less						
More than 3 years	.9953**	(.3123)	2.7056	.8734**	(.3232)	2.3950
Spouse and/or children in U.S.						
No						
Yes	.1613	(.3450)	1.1751	.4904	(.3692)	1.6330
Relatives live nearby						
No						
Yes	-.2969	(.3125)	.7431	-.1846	(.3325)	.8314
Location						
Dallas						
San Diego	.9717**	(.3295)	2.6423	.7262*	(.3523)	2.0672
Politically motivated migration						
No						
Yes	-.1517	(.3274)	.8592	-.0557	(.3466)	.9459
Place of origin						
Other Central Amer. country						
El Salvador	1.1064***	(.3324)	3.0235	1.0169**	(.3530)	2.7645
Sex						
Male						
Female	.5838	(.3250)	1.7928	.5117	(.3451)	1.6681
Feels part of the community						
No						
Yes				1.5660***	(.3268)	4.7875

<sup>a</sup> $\beta$  = Beta; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio.

<sup>b</sup>Summary statistics for Model 1: Model chi-square = 54.404 ( $p < .001$ ), degrees of freedom = 11, classification table = 69.29%,  $N = 241$ .

<sup>c</sup>Summary Statistics for Model 2: Model chi-square = 76.877 ( $p < .001$ ), degrees of freedom = 12, classification table = 75.73%,  $N = 239$ .

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

San Diego were generally in the United States less time than those in Dallas, and San Diego is on the United States–Mexico border, allowing for easy return.

Also significant, females were twice as likely as males to desire to stay. These findings generally support evidence from the previous studies that suggest female Latin American and Caribbean immigrants resist leaving, and often find ways to undermine plans for return migration (Pessar 1986).

For Central Americans, Model 1 indicates that having a family income in the top third of all incomes is significant, when controlling for all the other variables. The odds ratio suggests that Central Americans with higher family incomes were 3.5 times more likely to desire to reside permanently in the United States than those with lower incomes. Having an income in the middle third of all incomes is just above the significance level ( $p = 0.0522$ ), and those in this category are about twice as likely to intend to stay permanently as the others.

Residing in the United States for more than three years is also significant. The odds ratio indicates that Central Americans with more than three years in the United States are almost three times as likely as those with fewer years to desire to stay permanently in the United States.

Interestingly, living in San Diego was significant, everything else being equal. Central Americans living in San Diego were about 2.5 times as likely as their counterparts in Dallas to desire to stay permanently. In contrast to Mexicans, geographical proximity to the United States–Mexico border was not a negative influence on desires to stay. In addition, among the Central Americans, Salvadorans were three times as likely as other Central Americans to desire to stay.

What is not significant among Central Americans is also interesting. When time in the United States and the other variables are controlled for, having a spouse and/or children in the United States and having relatives who live nearby were not statistically significant influences on residence intentions. Migrating for political reasons was also not significant, nor was being female significant. This does not mean, however, that these variables did not influence settlement. For example, a spouse in the United States who works increases family income, which is significant, and other relatives and friends might assist you in finding a job, which would produce income. Moreover, the odds ratio suggests that women were 79 percent more likely than men to intend to stay permanently in the United States.

Adding “feels part of the community” to the model (Model 2) improves the statistical significance of the model for both Mexicans and Central Americans. For Mexicans, three or more years in the United States, having a spouse and/or child in the United States, and living in Dallas continue to have significant influences on intentions to stay in the United States. Being female was no longer significant, although females were still 64 percent more likely than males to intend to stay.

The results clearly underscore the importance of feeling part of the community. Not only is the influence on the dependent variable statistically significant, but the odds ratio indicates that those who feel part of the community are almost four times as likely to intend to stay in the United States as those who do not feel part of the community.

For Central Americans, having a higher family income and more than three years in the United States continue to be significant in Model 2, as do living in San Diego and being Salvadoran.

Importantly, for the general hypothesis put forward earlier, perceiving oneself to be a part of the community was also significant among Central Americans. Indeed, those who perceived themselves as part of the community were almost five times more likely to intend to stay permanently in the United States than those who did not feel like part of the community. Although having a spouse and children in the United States and relatives living nearby were insignificant statistically, I believe they contribute, if indirectly, to a Central American immigrant’s perception of community membership.

A brief note on the influence of speaking English is in order. In addition to the variables examined here, the models were run with the variable “English” added. This variable compared interviewees who indicated that they spoke English well to those who responded they spoke English “a little” or none at all. With the other variables held constant, English did not have a significant influence on the desire to settle.<sup>8</sup> The other influences were considerably more important. English was, however, significant in a regression on the natural log of wages. Perceiving oneself as confident with the English

language was related to earning more money; thus, English competency may indirectly affect the desire to settle.<sup>9</sup>

### Conclusions

Undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans migrate to the United States because of economic hardships and political turmoil in their home countries. Some come intending to stay permanently in the United States; others are sojourners who intend to return home after a period of time. Although they may have arrived alone, knowing few people, over time undocumented immigrants acquire social and economic ties to the United States, a finding that does not contradict Massey et al.'s (1987:255) assertion that undocumented immigrants are less likely than legal residents to acquire such ties. It does suggest, however, that the formation of linkages to the larger society does occur among undocumented immigrants and that these linkages are important for understanding why they settle in the United States.

Although some segments of the larger society may like to imagine undocumented immigrants to be rootless, unattached, and temporary residents in U.S. society, the evidence here suggests that this is not the case. In contrast to, perhaps even in defiance of, such images of them as temporary residents and as outsiders, many undocumented immigrants perceive themselves as part of the community and intend to become long-term or even permanent settlers. This is a process that appears to occur independently of public policies that restrict their presence, although legalization may speed up the process, as Massey et al. (1987) suggest. But in contrast to much accepted wisdom in the field of migration studies, I find that legal immigration status is but one of many possible factors contributing to a migrant's sense of belonging to a community.

Settlement by some undocumented immigrants occurs because an international migrant, even one who migrates outside of legal authority, can, and often does, develop a sense of belonging to multiple communities and of having multiple identities, some connecting him or her to a community "back home" and some created by his or her presence in a "host" community. Over time, an undocumented immigrant develops ties to the local economy and society. Experiences such as finding relatively steady employment, 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 even hoping to someday regularize one's immigration status are the types of linkages that influence the formation of a sense of community. Therefore, in contrast to most other work on international migrants, especially that on Mexicans in the United States, I find that immigrants can have multiple identities; they can imagine themselves to be part of their communities "back home," and they can also imagine places for themselves in their "new," or host, communities. An immigrant is not necessarily restricted to an either/or classification when imagining his or her community or, more accurately, communities.

Feeling oneself to be a part of the local community is a powerful influence on settlement. For whatever reason particular undocumented immigrants may have come to this perception, once they do so, they are likely to intend to stay permanently in the United States. Less likely to desire to stay permanently in the United States are those who do not perceive themselves as part of a community, be it because of inadequate time, attachment to family and community back home, or perception of isolation, experience of discrimination, an internalization of the larger society's image of the temporary "illegal alien" who does not really belong in the United States, or some combination of these and other factors.

These conclusions attest to the power of the imagined community. Imagining oneself to be part of a community influences other perceptions, desires, and behaviors. On the other hand, imagining oneself to be part of a community is often not enough. Others in that community may have a counterimage, which, given the structure of power

relationships, influences to a great degree the “truth” that is created about undocumented immigrants. The real-life implication of this truth making is the creation of public policies based on that truth. For example, undocumented students attending the University of California are classified as nonresidents in California, where they are charged foreign-student tuition, even though they may have lived for years in the state and their parents may be taxpayers. In 1991, Representative Elton Gallegly (R-Simi Valley) introduced legislation to Congress that would amend the U.S. Constitution to disallow the right of citizenship for children born in the United States with undocumented parents.

Many other such examples could be put forth, but the point has been made that imagining oneself to be part of a community may be less important, in some ways, than how the larger community defines community membership. Yet what I find remarkable among the undocumented immigrants I have interviewed is that the process of community formation occurs regardless of these constraints. It attests, perhaps, to the ability of humans to form social relationships and develop a sense of community under adverse conditions. This, too, is a form of power that will increasingly inform anthropological theories concerning community, identity, and nationalism as anthropologists continue to work among the many displaced and mobile populations in the world.

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### Notes

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1. Of course, the settlement of legal immigrants and refugees is also of considerable interest (see Lamphere 1992).

2. More than 80 percent of undocumented immigrants live in five states: California, New York, Texas, Illinois, and Florida (Passel and Woodrow 1984). California attracts the largest proportion of undocumented immigrants of all nationalities. For example, Cornelius (1988) found that in 1987, California had approximately half (1.74 million) of the nation's undocumented immigrants. Not surprisingly, most undocumented immigrants from Mexico also choose California as their state of residence. California alone absorbs at least half of the total flow of undocumented Mexican immigrants (Cornelius 1988:4). Of the approximately three million people legalized under the 1986 Immigration Law, most (55 percent) lived in California (CASAS 1989).

3. See Chavez (1991) for an extended analysis of the explanations interviewees gave for why they did or did not feel part of the community in the United States.

4. See also Malkki's (1990) work on the differences in historical consciousness among Hutu refugees in Tanzania for an example of how notions of a moral community are constructed under different conditions of exile.

5. Estevan T. Flores, with the assistance of Marta Lopez-Garza, coordinated data collection in Dallas.

6. Dallas County had, in 1980, approximately 1.5 million inhabitants, of which about 10 percent were Latino, of whom 92 percent were of Mexican origin. In 1990, Latinos were 16.6 percent of the 1,852,810 inhabitants, with those of Mexican origin accounting for 14.5 percent. As for Central Americans, 14,729 were counted in 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1984:6–1206, 1990). In 1980, the Dallas–Ft. Worth metro area had about 44,000 undocumented persons, of whom 32,000 were born in Mexico (Passel and Woodrow 1984).

7. For analyses that make extensive use of the qualitative data, see Chavez 1991 and 1992.

8. Because the English proved insignificant, the models were left out to meet space constraints.

9. A model was also tested using “feels part of the community” as the dependent variable and with the same independent variables as in the models above. The betas, significance levels, and odds ratios for the variables that proved significant were for Mexicans: 6–8 years of schooling ( $\beta$

= -.7764;  $p = .031$ ;  $OR = .46$ ), more than 3 years in the United States ( $\beta = .8133$ ;  $p = .047$ ;  $OR = 2.3$ ), spouse and/or kids in the United States ( $\beta = .7368$ ;  $p = .039$ ;  $OR = 2.1$ ), English ( $\beta = .9961$ ;  $p = .005$ ;  $OR = 2.7$ ). For Central Americans: High income ( $\beta = 1.4117$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $OR = 4.1$ ), San Diego ( $\beta = 1.0135$ ;  $p = .002$ ;  $OR = 2.8$ ), 9 or more years of schooling ( $\beta = .7239$ ;  $p = .053$ ;  $OR = 2.1$ ).

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