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Working Paper #109 Fall 1984

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Jose A. Rivera, Editor
Southwest Hispanic Research Institute
University of New Mexico
1805 Roma N.E., Room 201
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

(505) 277-2965

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INTRODUCTION

Do undocumented workers depress wages for legal workers? Do undocumented workers take jobs from legal workers? These questions are the most complicated and complex concerning undocumented (illegal) immigration into the United States. The literature can be divided into two opposing positions on these questions, each literature with its own underlying assumptions about the nature of the economic and social world. The first group of writings emphasizes that there is not a single labor market, but a segmented one (1). Alien and domestic workers do not compete for jobs because they do not desire the same jobs. Domestic workers shun the more dirty, dangerous, low-paying, dead end jobs, while undocumented workers find the same jobs preferable to opportunities in their home countries. The other position analyzes the labor market using supply and demand logic: the impact of undocumented labor on U.S. labor markets is negative because wages and working conditions would improve enough to entice domestic workers if not for the availability of pliant, hard-working undocumented workers (2). The first perspective stresses the role of occupation, its desirability and prestige, while the second focuses on the dynamics of the labor market and the interaction of supply and demand.

Both literatures overlook a large group of undocumented workers, however. Cornelius et al, (3) divides undocumented workers into two groups on the basis of their length of stay in the U.S.: those who stay a few months each year, returning to Mexico seasonally, and those who have year-round jobs and settle more or less permanently in the U.S. My own research, described here, sheds some light on this second group. Re-

garding pay differentials, in one industry, my data show that undocumented workers are paid less than citizens; undocumented workers enjoy somewhat permanent living and working conditions, but their undocumented status may prevent them from securing wages and promotions comparable to legal workers. The phenomenon is consistent with Becker's "human capital" theory (4). Segmented labor market and supply and demand analyses rarely examine the relationship between macro-level economic labor market conditions and micro-level employer-worker interaction. The larger economic forces of supply and demand do not exist in isolation but interact with certain local structural and cultural peculiarities that shape industry-specific labor markets. My analyses are informed by micro-level theoretical considerations. I examine the impact of undocumented labor on one industry-specific labor market in Albuquerque, New Mexico, demonstrating the complicated nexus between the market and careers of workers in the industry.

Interview data for this study have been collected in the field since May, 1983. Although data collection is on-going, over 70 people have been extensively interviewed; 22 documented alien and citizen roofers and 28 undocumented roofers are included in this number. Sampling has been purposive, although data collection is aimed at interviewing the entire population of documented and undocumented career roofers. Interviews have been conducted in an open-ended format in both Spanish and English. Due to the sensitive nature of this study and of the population, follow-up interviews have been conducted only as needed. These data are generally suited to analyses of worker displacement and wage depression in the roofing industry. The data are primarily sociological, however.

Little solid empirical evidence supports any of the theories that address the displacement/wage depression question. What seems to be a simple question actually requires a complex explanation. Unanswered questions abound concerning the relationship between the documented and undocumented labor forces (5). Unlike the agricultural pattern of almost exclusive dependence on undocumented workers, in many urban jobs in sectors such as manufacturing, construction and crafts, citizens and illegal immigrants work side by side. To date the only research on undocumented-legal worker interaction is Maram's study of the garment and restaurant industries in Los Angeles County (6). Because Mexican immigrants represent strong majorities in these industries, they are largely isolated from U.S.-born workers. Maram found that 86% of Los Angeles dishwashers and busboys were undocumented immigrants and among garment workers, 62% were undocumented Hispanics.

Only a handful of empirical studies have examined the impact of Mexican undocumented workers on U.S. labor markets. Cardenas analyzed the impact of Mexican undocumented workers on wages, employment, and social services in the San Antonio area and found that illegal Mexican labor may be displacing domestic workers but that low wages are attributable to other factors such as lack of unionization and low labor force skills (7). Briggs suggests that in the 1950s and 1960s the braceros depressed agricultural wages, driving unprecedented numbers of Chicanos to the cities where their poor labor skills hampered their success in the labor market (8). Nevertheless, Cardenas found that Mexican undocumented workers earn higher wages than Mexican-Americans with similar characteristics, casting doubt on the notion that Mexican undocumented workers

depress wages. Two aspects of the question not examined by Cardenas are employers' recruitment and hiring patterns and their assessment of the impact of undocumented workers. This study includes these aspects.

A recent study by Mines and Anzaldua on Mexican labor in the citrus industry of Ventura County, California found this labor market completely dominated by Mexican nationals constituting two categories: older, now legalized permanent residents, and younger, temporary, mostly undocumented Mexicans (9). These authors join others who argue that undocumented workers do not displace U.S. citizens because citizens are not inclined to do the same kind of work. A study by Mines does show a labor market where wages have been depressed by the presence of undocumented workers: the construction site clean-up industry in Orange and Los Angeles Counties (10). Mines argues that the predominance of undocumented workers explains the fall in real wages in this sector.

The level of analysis usually affects the nature of the evidence for each of the two positions. While studies of localized labor markets tend to depend upon which particular labor market is analyzed, macro-economic analyses indicate a mixed picture. Watcher sees "an economic trade-off" between illegal immigrants and the unskilled (11). Increased immigration benefits older skilled workers and the owners of capital but hurts the minority workers that predominate in the domestic unskilled labor force. Smith and Newman also found that unskilled Mexican-Americans are affected more than other workers, but the magnitude of the problem of depressed wages is less severe than generally believed (12).

Johnson and Orr have categorized various authors' hypotheses in the following manner (13). Watcher predicts that by 1985 the U.S. will experience a shortage of both highly-skilled and low-skilled workers; the latter category is of particular importance for immigration debate (14). Galbraith holds that some jobs are too demeaning, dirty, or of a dead-end nature to be filled by resident U.S. workers, and that immigration can offer opportunities for foreign workers as well as provide a service to the country as a whole (15). Piore (16) stresses the conditions of labor exploitation that create these secondary jobs, while Bhagwati (17) suggests that many "unprogressive industry", such as the garment industry would relocate to nations with less expensive labor if immigration were curtailed. Berry and Soligo (18) and Chiswick (19) concur with Watcher's economic tradeoff argument, but use different reasoning. For Chiswick cheap labor causes capital to be more productive. Berry and Soligo go further, concluding that so long as the skill and capital mix of immigrants differs from that of residents, the resident population will benefit from immigration. However, the gains are short term because over time unskilled immigrants may acquire skills and compete with skilled resident workers.

What these studies lack is systematic empirical investigation that estimates the effects of illegal immigration on specific low and semi-skilled occupations. A study which does address the question of impact is North and Houstoun's analysis of the U.S. labor market (12). This work is based on 481 interviews of apprehended undocumented workers. While this study provides needed information on the origin of illegal migrants, their destination in the U.S., length of stay and demographic

and occupational characteristics, highly aggregated data is inadequate to explore labor market interaction between undocumented and domestic workers.

Despite the apparent range of disagreement in these literatures, these works have much in common. "Labor" is analyzed as "labor,"that is, as interchangeable, displaceable, and marketable. In the roofing industry, in Albuquerque, I have found phenomena that challenge the assumptions of these literatures.

THE ROOFING INDUSTRY

Roofing is a semi-skilled job commonly viewed as an employer of undocumented workers. James Lucas, highest ranking officer of the Albuquerque INS, states that illegals are often found in the construction trades in Albuquerque, especially in roofing (21). Roofing is typical of the dangerous, dirty, and arduous jobs that some writers believe are shunned by citizens. Roofing in Albuquerque is unionized, although the union membership has dwindled substantially in the last few years. As of September, 1983, there were 43 roofing companies doing business in Albuquerque, but not one of the 43 is unionized.

Undocumented workers contitute a large and very visible portion of the roofing work force. I estimate that between 30 and 50 percent of the roofing labor force in Albuquerque to be undocumented with another 10 to 20 percent consisting of Mexicans with papers (most of whom are former undocumented workers). This estimate comes from my own interviews and conversations with roofing employees and company owners. Le-

gal immigration status and Spansish monolingualism are not significant barriers for Mexican undocumented workers.

In some firms, employers use the same criteria to hire undocumented roofers as they do for legal roofers. In others undocumented workers are explicitly recruited and form the bulk of the firm's workers, and in a few they are intentionally excluded from employment. Only one of the companies in the sample has a policy of requesting immigration documents from non-English speaking Hispanic job applicants. A few roofing companies rarely hire undocumented workers, yet most have a few on their payroll sometime during the year (though often the owner may not be aware of this).

ROOFING AS A CAREER

Unlike agricultural labor, restaurant and garment labor, and other jobs undocumented workers might take, roofing has many of the characteristics nominally associated with a career (22). Undocumented roofers tend to begin their careers in the summer when demand for roofing labor is greatest. They cannot be assured of steady year-round employment until they become skilled and experienced, and have been with the same company long enough to have seniority. This pattern of entry into the roofing work force in the summer describes legal workers equally well as illegal ones. The bulk of both legal and undocumented neophite roofers do not stay in the industry long enough to become experienced. They then seek employment elsewhere, or, in the case of undocumented workers, often return to Mexico. Judging from the work histories of the experienced undocumented roofers, some of those who do return to Mexico after

their initial experience with roofing return to Albuquerque and work again as roofers. Others bounce around from job to job, while a significant portion stay on as roofers, often staying at the first firm which employs them.

Consequently, many undocumented workers live and work in Albuquerque for several years despite their seemingly precarious status as illegal immigrants. These workers come to consider Albuquerque their home and plan to continue to be roofers even though they have no papers or any idea or strategy on how to obtain them. They are often accompanied by their brothers or other relatives and sometimes bring their wives and children after having established themselves first. The wives and children are brought to the U.S. by the workers themselves, or by friends or other presently unknown means.

A typical roofing career begins as a minimum wage entry level position and, as noted, most neophite roofers never advance beyond this stage. Neophites who last a year or more can expect a modest raise accompanied by a promotion (from "unskilled" to "semi-skilled") and increased prestige within the company. The phenomenon at this stage is well explained by Becker's theory of human capital; that is, by lasting a year or more, the neophite has, first acquired general roofing skills and, second, specific company skills. General roofing skills are transferrable to other roofing firms should the worker switch companies. These skills include: the processes involved in a variety of roofing activities, such as laying a new roof (usually of the hot tar type) and re-roofing; and learning to avoid the inherent dangers in roofing--burns

and falls. Company specific skills are not transferrable from one roofing firm to another and they involve both inter-personal and technical aspects: gaining the confidence of co-workers, getting along with the firm's boss and co-workers; learning roofing methods peculiar to the company; developing "specialty" skills--roofing tasks not done often enough to warrant all the company's workers learning how to perform them.

Table 1 (see page 23) shows the distribution of a sample of 48 roofers in the four stages of the roofer's career. The distinction between general roofing skills and specific company skills is essential to any understanding of the roofer's career. Table 2 shows mean wages for the sample broken down by industry and company experience. As Table 2 shows, roofers with one or more years of industry experience will begin a new job at a higher wage than roofers with less than one year of industry experience. The wage differential for industry experience continues until the end of the first year. Thereafter, company specific experience comes into play.

The value of industry experience is extremely limited. That is, a roofer with ten years of industry experience and a roofer with two years of industry experience will start at more or less the same wage. After working about a year for the same company, the roofer acquires enough experience to command a wage much higher than alternative unskilled work. In this sense, the career ties the worker to the industry.

Subsequent stages of the roofing career are influenced by company experience only. For the next five years the roofer receives small merit

raises. Should the worker leave to seek employment in another company, the career is set back to the end of the first stage, that is, entry into a company with experience. In this sense, the career ties the worker to a specific company. In the third stage the worker becomes proficient enough to lead a roofing crew. When an opening in the company's worker hierarchy allows the worker to be offered a foreman's job, the worker does not always accept the offer. For some, the problems involved in handling additional responsiblities are not worth the small increase in pay. However, if the worker wishes to move on to the next stage, he must become a foreman. In the final stage, worker's are given "specialty" tasks, and often represent the company to customers. In this stage, the undocumented worker that has not learned English cannot continue to assume new responsibities and consequently may not receive the same pay increases as documented English speaking workers do.

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF UNDOCUMENTED LABOR IN THE U.S.

Whether the undocumented roofer had intended to live permanently in the U.S. or not, the career binds him to live in the U.S. General roofing industry skills are worthless in Mexico; there is no roofing industry, for all practical purposes, especially hot tar roofing. Moreover, the experience acquired from a year's work places the roofer significantly ahead of undocumented workers in unskilled industries. Put simply, the undocumented roofer has acquired human capital which only brings a return in Albuquerque. Given this incentive to stay permanently in the U.S., the undocumented roofer faces a number of social strains, including loneliness and fear of capture.

The possibility of capture by "la migra" would lead one to expect their lives to be on the margins of U.S. society. This is usually not the case because of two related reasons. First, it is not likely that the worker will be caught by INS officials. As has been shown in the literature, the more time that elapses after illegal entry into the U.S. the less likely is the alien to be apprehended. Even though the worker may be caught once or twice every five years, the difficulties of returning to Albuquerque from Juarez are not so insurmountable as to require them to "start over." Apprehension is much less likely in Albuquerque than in route from the border to the worker's U.S. destination, and many undocumented workers establish permanent homes and return to Mexico as seldom as possible. Others return to Mexico every 6 months or so, (usually to be with the family) and consequently are apprehended more often. One worker has been caught around 15 times in 5 years. He is less comfortable than Mexicans with papers, but not so uncomfortable as to discourage him from recently bringing his family to live permanently in the U.S., even without papers. Employers usually allow the worker to regain his job, and the household is usually intact as the time elapsed from apprehension to return to Albuquerque need not be more than a few days. Indeed, some workers, especially those from the state of Chihuahua, take advantage of the unexpected "free ride" home by visiting relatives. Thus, the level of anxiety related to apprehension by the INS is low not only due to the relatively small inconvenience of being caught, but also its unlikeliness. According to James Lucas, the officer in charge of the INS sub-office in Albuquerque, only two officers work full time investigating illegal immigration cases.

The second reason why the undocumented worker leads less of a marginal life than one would expect is because of the presence of a thriving and growing Mexican subculture in Albuquerque. Because of the large native Chicano population in Albuquerque, this subculture is somewhat invisible to Anglo-Americans. For the Mexican undocumented worker it is quite visible, and he takes advantage of its presence. The undocumented worker who has recently arrived seeks help from people he assumes speak Spanish, and if he succeeds in "connecting" with sympathetic Mexicans or Chicanos it is likely he will quickly find a place to live near other Mexican nationals. Circles of friends develop around acquaintences from work and the neighborhood, and a social life evolves which in many ways resembles the one left behind in Mexico. This allows the undocumented worker to evade the isolation that can occur in U.S. cities which have not developed such extensive Mexican subcultures.

Despite this integration into the Mexican community, it would would be misleading to say that this means the undocumented workers are rapidly becoming "assimilated" into the larger anglo-oriented U.S. society. One of the most important indicators of assimilation is English language acquisition. Though many undocumented workers do not learn any English, those that stay longer than just a few months may be divided into two groups: those who learn rudimentary work related English, and those who learn varying degrees of conversational English. Those who learn no English or rudimentary work related English were found in situations where they had little contact at work with native English speakers. In one large roofing company where undocumented workers form the majority of the employees, most of these workers do not know conversational Eng-

lish. In companies where Mexican aliens were a small minority, undocumented workers usually learn more English, though their outside contacts with U.S. society did not go beyond the Chicano community. Mexican undocumented workers in Albuquerque do not have much contact with Anglos either at work or after work hours.

While it is clear that the undocumented worker is not rapidly assimilating into U.S. Anglo culture, the cultural impact of living in Albuquerque's Mexican community is less clear. The undocumented worker does not assimilate into the anglo community in the fashion other immigrant groups do because of the large native Chicano and Mexican populations in Albuquerque. The presence of these two groups probably slows down the assimilation process simply because they obviate the necessity of learning English. However, assimilation into the Chicano community occurs in the second generation. In interviews at several undocumented workers' homes I noticed that children who were born in Albuquerque, or who arrived at an early age, rapidly learn English at school.

The Mexican undocumented worker mixes first with the Mexican population and feels separate from the Chicanos due to both class and cultural differences. The class differences are less important than cultural differences because of the job mobility of the undocumented worker and because many Chicanos occupy the same jobs as do undocumented workers. The cultural differences take precedence in demarcating tension lines between the two groups and are usually language differences. Mexicans are immediately identified by Chicanos because of the marked differences between Mexican and northern New Mexican Chicano Spanish. Contrary to

popular belief, these differences are due less to differences in dialect, but to the degree of Spanish proficiency. As the younger generation of Chicanos are commonly English rather than Spanish dominant, tension is stronger between this group and undocumented workers from Mexico.

Differences in lexicon and accent not only reveal which side of the border the speaker is from, but remind him of the fact that the Chicano and the Mexican are from different countries with different experiences at home, school, and elsewhere. Though Chicano political leaders sometimes stress the cultural ties they feel with Mexico, my interviews reveal that many working class Chicanos in New Mexico feel that they have more in common with anglos than with Mexicans. Likewise, Mexicans can't understand how people "de la misma raza" (of the same race) could so strongly desire to differentiate themselves from Mexican nationals. A very large number of the Mexicans interviewed recalled instances where Chicanos called them "mojados" in a derogatory fashion, while just as many Chicanos prefer to be called "Spanish" and consider being called "Mexican" an insult. Thus, Mexican-Chicano conflict originates from the differing perceptions of ethnic identity and is most often unveiled in conversation. The conflict is not economic in origin and does not necessarily reflect economic cycles of high and low employment. While in periods of high unemployment this conflict may accentuate, I feel that full employment would not erase it.

It would seem that this conflict would discourage the undocumented worker from remaining in Albuquerque. For some this is the case. Those

that do stay, find it more convenient to consciously or unconsciously modify their Spanish to a form that is less "foreign" to the Chicano. This language modification allows the Mexican undocumented workers to communicate more easily with Chicanos and to de-emphasize linguistic differences. Though Mexican identity is still retained in speech, the Chicano percieves these modifications as evidence of willingness to fit in with local language custom. Substitution of English and "Chicano Spanish" words for certain "Mexican Spanish" words that are either unfamiliar or unknown to Chicanos and the adoptation of English words for objects and processes that are uncommon in Mexico are two types of the modifications of the Spanish language among undocumented workers in Albuquerque. Examples of of the former are "pompa" for "bomba, "ir pa atras" for "regresar," "weldear" for "soldar,"and "windshield" for "parabrisas," and of the later are "welfare", "overtime,"and "freeway." Changes in Spanish vocabulary are the most salient traits acquired of the long-staying undocumented workers and are noticeable even among those with less than six months in Albuquerque. In a group conversation at the home of an undocumented roofer one observant twenty-one year old man from Chihuahua commented that in the three months he had been in Albuquerque he had learned to new terms for automobile parts, such as "plogas" for "bujias" "brecas for frenos" and "mofle" for "silenciador."

Chicano-undocumented worker tension is especially strong among Chicanos with little contact with undocumented workers and tends to diminish in situations where Chicanos work alongside undocumented workers. Many Chicanos and Anglos alike report that they enjoy working with Mexicans, undocumented and documented, and claim that American citizens have been

"spoiled" by welfare and unemployment. Furthermore, they feel that Americans simply do not want to perform the physical labor jobs because they have lead "soft" lives without preparation for such work. In Albuquerque employers and workers alike tend to view the Mexican presence in roofing as a natural phenomenon that is explained by proximity to the border, the physical arduosness of roofing, and the stronger manual labor work ethos of Mexicans.

The integration of the undocumented worker is furthered by the "Mexicanization" of the roofing labor force. This "Mexicanization" is not occuring because undocumented workers are edging out legal workers, but because employers have such difficulties in attracting responsible citizen workers who are willing to make roofing their career. Several employers complained of that American workers too often become liabilities due to drug abuse on and off the job, frequent absenteeism and theft of company property. Mexican undocumented workers tend to be model employees and this overrides their disadvantages for the employer. Though the data are sketchy at this time, it is possible that undocumented Mexican entry into the Albuquerque roofing industry occured during the sixties when public assistance programs came into existence and obviated the necessity of many U.S. citizens to work in low and semi-skilled occupations. The presence of undocumented has increased gradually since that time. In some companies, Anglos are so outnumbered that many of them have learned a work related Spanish that I call "roofing Spanish." The Mexican subculture is permeating these companies to such a degree that anti-Mexican Anglos and Chicanos tend seek jobs in roofing companies without the Mexican element. Thus, in companies where undocumented la-

bor's presence is low, citizen-undocumented worker tension is high, while in companies where the undocumented presence is high, tension is low.

ARE UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS PAID LESS?

When undocumented workers were asked if they knew of cases where undocumented workers had been paid less than legal workers, none came up with specific examples, though several said that the practice does exist in some roofing companies to a limited extent. The undocumented workers who are said to be paid less are typically newcomers to the U.S. and to roofing. Stories also circulate among roofers about employers who fire all their undocumented employees on payday. But none of these rumors were substantiated. In general, my data show that undocumented workers are given raises in the same fashion as are legal workers. As a general rule, either employers reward the worker for having lasted a few weeks at the job, for having shown that they are competent workers, or the employee solicits a raise. The latter is less often the case for either undocumented or legal workrs. Undocumented workers are also promoted to higher positions with the same frequency and based upon the same criteria as legal workers. Some even manage to become roofing crew foremen.

Employer impressions not withstanding, as Table 3 shows, undocumented roofers earn less than legal roofers at every stage of the career. In general, undocumented roofers earn twenty percent less than legal roofers at the same career stage. Two hypotheses might explain this difference. First, it is possible that the differential is due to nothing more than racial discrimination and exploitation. Second, it is possi-

ble that their illegal status is inconsistent with optimal career advancement. As it turns out, the second hypothesis is the more plausible.

Interviews with employers demonstrate the widely held perception that there are serious disadvantages to hiring undocumented workers. While undocumented roofers work for less pay, the saving to the employer is not large enough to compensate the employer for the additional problems of hiring undocumented workers. The concept of a career underlies this dilemma. The career ties the worker to the company, of course, but at the same time, it ties the company to the worker. The question now arises as to why undocumented workers are hired at all. Indeed, most of the employers interviewed believe (incorrectly) that hiring undocumented aliens is illegal and that the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill has passed and is currently in effect.

When faced with a worker shortage, roofing employers assess whether an unskilled laborer or a skilled, experienced roofer is needed. Undocumented workers are hired under the same criteria as legal workers. That is, if the worker appears at the company yard at starting time (six o'clock in the summer and seven o'clock in the winter as a rule) and if the employer needs a laborer that day, the applicant will normally be hired on the spot. The employer retains the employee if he shows a reasonable amount of zeal in accomplishing the menial labor tasks involved in the unskilled aspects of roofing, i.e. shoveling gravel or carrying buckets of hot tar.

That an applicant may be undocumented usually does not enter into the employers considerations. Roofing contractors want willing, dependable, and energetic workers. Due to the enormous rate of first-time roofing laborers who quit within the first two weeks of employment, employers often desparately need "good" workers and this explains why employers hire undocumented workers.

There seem to be two reasons for the labor shortage in roofing. First, many legal workers find other less dangerous, dirty, and arduous jobs with roughly the same starting pay of $3.75 to $4.50 an hour and leave roofing within a matter of a few weeks. Others are forced to exit roofing in the slow winter months. These same factors also create a high rate of employee turnover. To illustrate, an employer who maintains a year-round work force of around twenty roofers reported that last year he sent out over 300 W-2 tax forms. This high turnover rate enables an increasing number of undocumented workers to enter the roofing trade.

The undocumented worker is filling a vacuum in Albuquerque's roofing labor force. Due to the inconveniences involved in hiring undocumented roofers, the employer necessarily starts the undocumented worker at a lower wage. Subsequent wage increases are added to this base rate, so wage differentials continue as a constant through every stage of the career. Of course, to the extent that this difference is discrimination or exploitation by the employer, it is a phenomenon that only occurs at the first stage of the career.

An exception to this rule is seen at the final stage of the career. After six years with a company, a roofer is eligible to move up to the final career stage which, in some respects, is a management position. At this stage, however, the senior roofer is required to interact with customers. Since fluent English is often required in the final stage of the career, undocumented workers are often disadvantaged. Thus, a disproportionate number of the highest paid roofers, often earning more than $10.00 per hour, are legal workers.

CONCLUSION

The motivating question of this study is, are undocumented workers paid less than legal workers? Interview data from one industry, presented here, demonstrate that the answer to this question is yes. This simple answer ignores the complicated and complex nature of this phenomenon, however. While undocumented workers in the roofing industry earn less money than their legal peers, the difference cannot be explained by discrimination or exploitation on the part of employers. Rather, the difference is due to the career structure of the industry. Disregarding market disadvantages (language and other problems), the career paths of undocumented and legal roofers are remarkable similar. Cornelius (1981) argues that more attention should be directed towards the " 'permanent settler' subpopulation of Mexican immigrants, both legal and illegal" (23). The research presented here follows this tradition. An unanswered question of this tradition is, given the difficult life of the Mexican immigrant, why do so many choose to become "permanent settlers?" In the case of undocumented roofers, the answer is clear. The roofing

career ties the undocumented roofer to an industry and, in Albuquerque at least, to a specific company. As time passes, the undocumented roofer acquires human capital which commands a return only in the roofing industry and only in a specific roofing company. Permanent settlement in the U.S. becomes an economically rational decision.

This phenomenon has important implications for research in labor migration. The traditional econometric approach to this subject (Briggs and Piore, for example) has ignored sociological aspects of the problem, especially career phenomena. While the econometric approach has proved successful in analyses of unskilled industries, it cannot adequately explain the phenomena reported here. In the roofing industry in Albuquerque, "labor" is not "labor." Two roofers of equal experience but working for different companies are not interchangeable. A highly experienced roofer who starts anew at another company, necessarily drops several rungs on the career ladder. Here labor is not interchangeable. The supply of foreign labor is not inelastic nor is labor migration driven by demand; in fact, the migration of labor from Mexico to the U.S. has no effect on the roofing industry in Albuquerque.

One major consequence of the econometric tradition in this area is an unhealthy focus on two essentially trivial questions: Do undocumented workers depress wages and do undocumented workers displace legal workers? The answers to both questions are predetermined by analytic assumptions. The more important questions for future research will concern the social realities of the immigrant experience. These include assimilation, political integration, and mobility. Answers to these

questions will require a theoretical foundation that looks beyond the simple questions of labor markets. Furthermore, this research will require analyses of micro-level data which have been noticeably lacking in the literature.

Table 1 - Percentages by Experience and Status

Company Experience	
- Less than 6 months	25.0%
- Less than 12 months	22.9%
- Less than 6 years	35.4%
- 6 years or more	16.7%
Industry Experience	
- Less than 1 year	33.3%
- One year or more	66.7%
Worker Status	
- Documented	45.8%
- Undocumented	54.2%

Table 2 - Regression of Experience on Wages

	Industry Experience	
Company Experience	Less than 1 year	One year or more
- Less than 6 months	$ 4.04	$ 5.67
- Less than 12 months	$ 4.15	$ 6.68
- Less than 6 years		$ 6.87
- 6 years or more		$ 8.69

Multiple R = .74979

Table 3 - Regression of Status and Experience on Wages

	Immigration Status	
Company Experience	Legals and Citizens	Undocumenteds
- Less than 6 months	$ 5.75	$ 4.01
- Less than 12 months	$ 5.92	$ 4.79
- Less than 6 years	$ 7.74	$ 5.62
- 6 years or more	$ 9.15	$ 7.91

Multiple R = .83468

FOOTNOTES

1. See Michael J. Piore, BIRDS OF PASSAGE: MIGRANT LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

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