Examining the Lives of Undocumented Day Laborers in a Southeast Texas Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Setting

By

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Abstract

Current sociological research focuses on the lives of undocumented Hispanic immigrants located in the West Coast and Southwestern regions of the United States. However, a review of the literature reveals a lack of research regarding the community experiences of undocumented day laborers in southeast Texas, where the second largest population of undocumented Hispanic immigrants resides. Semi-structured field interviews with undocumented day laborers explored the group's socio-demographic characteristics in a Southeast Texas metropolitan and nonmetropolitan setting. A 44-item survey questionnaire coupled with prior social research findings provided a practical description undocumented day laborers lived experiences by location. The study gave details into the daily struggles and coping strategies day laborers use in different community places. The findings revealed: 1) undocumented workers experiences and socio-demographic characteristics varied by community place, 2) social marginalization was a heteronomous frame across the two groups, and 3) an interactional community field approach could prove useful in understanding the formation, access, and use of social capital in new migration destinations.

Keywords: *Hispanic immigration, Social marginalization, Interactional field theory.*

1. Introduction

The PEW Hispanic Center estimates that 11.9 million unauthorized Latino immigrants live in just four states: California, Texas, Florida and New York (Passel and Cohn 2011). Social workers and public policy representatives recognize that the growing population of unauthorized immigrants presents significant and paradoxical challenges. For example, undocumented Hispanics represent a much sought-after source of inexpensive labor, but at the community level, they – documented and undocumented – are also associated with a negative pull on public resources and public safety (Fussell 2011; Gonzales 2011; Passel and Cohn 2009; Lynamand Cowley 2007; Sullivan and Rehm 2005; Wilson 2002; Chavez 2001; Esbenshade 2000). More recently, Doty's (2010) research demonstrates a significant positive correlation with the use of 'soft' but nonetheless deleterious mentions in the general media and an increase in anti-migrant group activities. The author revealed that anti-immigrant rhetoric in the United States stigmatized non-white Hispanic migrants as a drain on public resources and a general threat to the country's security.

Heightened community fears have pushed legislators to enact tough, anti-immigration laws to accelerate the identification, arrest, and deportation of undocumented workers in the guise of protecting communities (Popke2011; Cleaveland 2010; Associated Press 2012). Research demonstrates that these juridical strategies at the federal, state, county, and municipal government levels marginalize workers' social exchanges within their respective communities and seriously undermined their access and use of social services (Ward and Freedman 201; Pew Hispanic Center 2007; Friedman 2009;Marietta 2006; Ngai 2004). However, the characterization of undocumented and documented Hispanic workers "as a threat to the nation" is not a nascent condition(Chavez 2001:8). Bean, Telles, and Lowell's (1987) earlier study shows that the American public and policymakers' attention in the late 1980s increasingly centered on the putative societal costs and lost wages of American workers due to the arrival of low-skilled

undocumented Latino immigrants. The authors found that generally, the negative perceptions that cast Mexican immigrants as undermining American workers' wages and as a destabilizing force in their communities was invalid.

As rural sociologist Daniel T. Lichter (2012) argues, "The uneven growth of rural minorities in general has contributed to a new urbanization and urbanism of rural America, born of a growing cultural and economic heterogeneity" that has contributed "to a possible decline in the community' (p.5). In an earlier study, Crowley and Lichter (2009) demonstrated that on a case-by-case basis, rural communities in the American Heartland were ill prepared to meet increased demands on public services. They pointed out that immigrant Hispanic ethnic groups have placed "growing tax burdens associated with public assistance, health care, and schooling" on communities that has consequently fostered "concerns about white backlash, hostile racial and ethnic relations, and community conflict" in these rural places (Crowley and Lichter 2009:574).

Popke(2011) confirms that the past several decades of Hispanic immigration in the southern United States represents a redefined migrant "identity" tied to the "dynamics of globalization and transnational mobility…the presence of the migrant body from the other side of the border is decidedly unnatural, something illegal, even alien. Thus, the transnational migrant is figured not as a subject of responsibility or hospitality, but instead as an intruder into 'our' circumscribed public sphere" (p. 242, 250).Popke's assertion points to a lack of clarity regarding the practical and contradictory dimensions of undocumented day laborers marginalized lives based on an institutionalized, systematic denial of their community membership based on their racial, economic, and/or cultural identity (Pearson 2010; Feagin 2006; Rushing 1972).

In order to extend Lichter's and Popke's observations, we examine the lives of undocumented day laborers in two southeast Texas settings: one metropolitan and one nonmetropolitan place. Specifically, this project describes undocumented day laborers' adaptive strategies – informal networks, one-on-one supportive relationships or informal site-specific groups – using an interactional community field approach. Community interactional field theorists posit that a community is more than simply a geographical space that people share; it is a relational and dynamic social frame of associations and behaviors made up of various social fields (Wilkinson 1970; Theodori 2005, 2008). We believe an interactional community field perspective offers a parsimonious schema to better identify the intersection of Hispanic immigrant marginalization and the consequent community field dynamics.

Research Problem
Social research demonstrates undocumented migrant workers are a marginalized group, but what are the latent consequences of the marginalization of Hispanic undocumented day laborers and the consequences that emerge in the communities they reside in. This requires examining their various community associations/relations, the meanings they construct about themselves and their roles in their host communities (Cheung et al. 2011; Lichter 2012). As Fontdevila, Opazo, and White (2011) argue, meaning is foundationally "pragmatic and therefore problem-solving driven, meaning is generated through identities struggling for control" (p. 179). The social construction of undocumented workers' practical lives is a two-sided coin: on one side are the institutional and reproductive social processes of their host country and on the other, there are the individual, localizable social interactions that represent their particular social field or habitus (Flore-Yeffal and Aysa-lastra 2011). This research asks undocumented workers to reveal their stories of practical lived experiences. We also examine the differences in the social capital exchanges between the Hispanic undocumented workers' groups in a metropolitan and non-metropolitan space to illustrate their localized constructed conditions. Finally, we investigate the uneven growth of rural Hispanic undocumented workers that Lichter (2012) points out has contributed to a decline in the homogeneity of community places.

Research Questions

RQ1: Are undocumented day laborers a heterogeneous or homogeneous ethnic group by migration destination? Specifically, are the sociodemographic characteristics of undocumented day laborers different by migration location (nonmetropolitan and metropolitan)?

RQ2: Are there differences in undocumented day laborers' human capital and social capital resources by migration location (rural versus urban)?

RQ3: Do undocumented workers perceive their lives as marginalized and alienated from their residing communities?

RQ4: Are there indicators that undocumented day laborers are less likely or more likely to demonstrate social bonding and bridging capital in their communities by destination?

2. Relevant Literature

A review of current research into the social and material processes that make up undocumented day laborers' community experiences demonstrates significant institutional marginalization of Hispanic immigrants in the western, eastern, and southwestern regions of the United States (Kornfeld 2005; Lopez and Minushkin. 2008; Grimm and Andsager2011; Kim et al. 2010; Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro 2011). The embedded experiences of undocumented Hispanic immigrants within the various gateway destinations in the United States are well-documented, however, public policy researchers more recently have turned their attention to undocumented day laborers lived experiences in Texas (Mendoza 2009; Arbona et al., 2010; Gleeson 2010; Cheung et al., 2011); a state that has a long and conflict-oriented history associated with Hispanic migrant workers (Aguirre and Turner 2009; Organista 2007; Mendoza 2009; Lichter 2012).

Farmer and Moon (2009; 2011) have documenteda key sociodemographic factor that encourages Mexican migrant workers' decisions to locate to a southern rural or urban location over the last decade. Specifically, they found thata lack of "family migration capital"resulted in a new "pioneer" migrant who relies on the receiving local community's social networks to make out-migration destination choices between either rural or urban spaces (2011:66). Cheung et al. (2011) conducted interviews at day labor hiring centers in Houston, Texas, to discover and describe the practical difficulties undocumented workers faced. They found that day laborers expressed: 1) heightened anxiety over separation from family members; 2) "emotional pain" linked to the "practical difficulties resulting from their status as illegal immigrants"; and 3) wage exploitation and discrimination on the job site (2011:83). Additionally, immigration studies conducted byCheong (2006) and McConnell (2008) incorporated social capital concepts to examine group cohesion and sociality at the institutional and community levels. Cheong shows that social capital building among Hispanic immigrant families in impoverished Los Angeles neighborhoods varies by community acceptance and the neighborhood context of immigrant families' residence. She finds that Hispanic immigrants demonstrate strong family ties and cooperation among people with a common culture, but the fungibility of social capital is "dependent on the community context in which minority ethnic families are embedded" (2006:369). Both studies identify the bonding aspects of social capital with their particular study group, and confirm that undocumented immigrant social fields rely on bonding more than bridging social capital.

Nannestad et al.'s (2008) research reveals that bonding social capital is important – as outcomes of the interactions within social fields – but sometimes incompatible with developing broader social relations in a community. Their study found that bridging social capital, which is primarily an outwardly-directed, inter-group social connection, is more useful to developing community relationships than bonding social capital, which is generally inward looking (an intra-group resource), that works to exclude others. Bridging social capital is an important concept for immigrant studies because it demonstrates the density of group contacts across social fields and its effectiveness to marshal groups to meet broader community goals that foster community stability. From a community interactional field perspective, social capital appears a reasonable, Weberian ideal-type to infer undocumented immigrants' access to and use of

community-based resources. Additionally, identifying the extent of bonding and bridging opportunities within and across undocumented day laborers respective social fields could demonstrate the effect of marginalization and its latent consequences at the community and institutional levels (Wilkinson 1970).

A community field represents the overall structure of social interactions that emerge because of particular and novel experiential contexts or generalizing activities within social fields that perform in a means-end, instrumental fashion to accomplish some "common good" for the community (Theodori 2005:665). This is an important distinction as the social disorganization literature demonstrates that "as the social capital, social cohesion, or social trust of a community deteriorates" so goes the community's ability to solve problems and maintain its community attachments (Deller and Deller 2012:229; Thompson 2009; Bourdieu 1977: Wall, Ferrazzi, andSchryer 1998). Hence, an interactional community field theory establishes a critical adaptive framework from which to study the structures of generalizable experiences (habitus) that comprise first, social fields and then a community field (Bourdieu 1986).

Analytically, a community field is also a shifting economic entity, distinct and exclusive of other social spaces and is conceptually different from community operationalized as a simple network of people who interact primarily beyond a localized physical boundary. Returning to Bourdieu (1977; 1986), Wilkinson (1970, 1999), and Theodori (2005; 2008), each theorist demonstrates that community fields are *sui generis* amid localized networks and affiliated economic associations (Flora and Flora 2003). This establishes social fields within a community frame that informs social discourse and normative power-exchange relations (Blau 1986). Social fields then represent the narrowing or limiting possibilities of community discourse whereby community members learn community-oriented normative conduct (Putnam 1995) and the community-as-place then blossoms to represent more than a geographically bound territory (Theodori 2008; Whitham 2012). Once symbolic capital exchanges occur, *community* emerges; an epiphenomenon of group-oriented associations and attachments arising from purposive-driven goals across social fields (Robinson 1989).

3. Methods

Survey Methodology
Because the study groups' variable mobility, surreptitious social exchanges, and *hidden-but-not-hidden* gathering locations in Houston and Huntsville, Texas, a convenience sample was used in place of a randomized sample. A survey instrument with open and closed-ended questions allowed subjects an opportunity to talk about their current life experiences. Subjects' responses to open-ended questions were written down as simple declarative statements. The statements were coded initially into dichotomous categories: positive or negative responses to the conditions they experienced. A second review of subjects' responses led to the development of generally implied linkage of their "social worlds and organizational settings" (Charmaz 2006:56). Their commentary demonstrated specific meaning found in a subject's speech. For example, a question asked subjects for a simple yes-no response to whether family supported their efforts and offered help when needed. Participants could then elaborate on how their family demonstrates support and help; or explain why they believed they were not helpful. The follow up questions provided a qualitative linkage to demonstrate undocumented day laborers' reported in-the-community experiences.

Sample
The study used a nonrandom, convenience sample to select a total of 35 undocumented workers from Houston (N=25) and Huntsville (N=10), Texas. The unit of analysis is the individual undocumented day laborer and the level of analysis is the two communities. The two locations are 'hiring sites' of undocumented workers known by local informants and various small to medium-sized independent contractors. Prior researchers estimated the number of formal and informal day labor sites ranges from 30 to nearly 60 in Houston (Cheung et al. 2011), where the total primary metropolitan statistical area

population is estimated at four million and Hispanics make up nearly a third of the area population or about 919,000 persons (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Huntsville's total population is 38,548; the Hispanic population is 7,211 or 18.7 percent of the city's population (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Huntsville is located within Walker County, a rural, non-metro county census designation (U.S. Census Bureau 2012).

A windshield and field reconnaissance of the reported surreptitious sites in Houston and Huntsville, Texas, allowed confirmation of informants' and prior researchers' details about undocumented day labor pickup locations in the two cities. During each visit, undocumented migrants arrive each day in the early morning through the late afternoon hours (6:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Central Standard Time) at the two locations, confirming the feasibility of interviewing subjects there that matched the intended study population (Berg 2009: 46-47).

Recruitment of 25 undocumented day laborers of Hispanic origin in Houston, Texas took place at a heavily traveled city street and commuter highway intersection. The southwest location housed strip malls, franchised fast-food restaurants, 24-hour auto fuel convenience stores, and a nationally recognized building supply outlet with a large parking lot. There are as many as 200-day laborers waiting near these businesses and parking lots on most weekdays and weekends. In Huntsville, 10 undocumented day laborers volunteered to participate in the study from a total group of 15 workers. The location was a residential street that intersected with a state road. All of the undocumented day laborers were Hispanic, who reported waiting for job offers to perform some form of manual labor that included landscaping services and commercial/retail building construction.

The study interviewer, a Hispanic female interviewer who spoke and wrote English and Spanish, approached undocumented workers at each site and asked if they would participate for a $10 cash card payment. After a brief introduction, day laborers were read a statement in Spanish that asked for their participation, indicated that no personal information would be gathered that would identify the subjects to immigration or police authorities, and were allowed to refuse to answer any questions with which they felt uncomfortable. The Sam Houston State University's Institutional Review Board approved the research project in July 2011.

Study Instrument

The administered questionnaire has 44 closed-ended questions and took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete with each participant. The survey questions comprise general demographics, personal safety and trust issues, country of origin, type of U.S. living arrangements, types of medical problems and social services assistance sought in Texas. Additional survey questions focused on subjects' contact with U.S. and local law enforcement officials, personal drug and alcohol use, whether they experienced conflict over wages promised or unpaid with local employers. The survey instrument also provided open-ended questions that followed closed-ended questions that gave subjects an opportunity to elaborate on their life experiences. For example, subjects could talk about their travel from their country of origin to the United States and their perceived social relationships as undocumented day laborers in the Texas communities where they reside. Open-ended questions solicited narratives about migrants' daily living conditions, their personal experiences of stress, and their reported coping mechanisms.

4. Findings

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and tests for significance between the two study groups. The 35 undocumented male day laborers in Houston and Huntsville reported their countries of origin primarily as Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Colombia. There was a significant difference in country of origin, time of arrival in Texas, type of residence, and transportation used to arrive at job hiring sites between the metropolitan and nonmetropolitan groups ($X^2 < 0.01$). Houston day laborers primarily migrated from Guatemala and Honduras had a mean age of 33 years old, resided in apartments, and

walked to their work sites. Huntsville workers were from Mexico, had a mean age of 39 years old, resided in houses, and used personal autos or carpooled with other day laborers to get to a hiring site.

Table 1.Summary of Houston and Huntsville Study Participants Key Demographics.

Characteristics	Houston	Huntsville	X^2 test of Significance
Mean Age	33 yrs	39 yrs	0.105
Time in U.S.	before 2009 (60%)	before 2009 (80%)	0.015
Type Job	1. Construction (68%) 2. Landscape (36%) (Note: Ranked by most often temp work)	1. Construction (90%) 2. Landscape (30%) (Note: Ranked by most often temp work)	0.179 0.735
Marital Status	56% married	50% married	0.716
Extended Family in U.S.	Yes = 60%	Yes = 48%	0.521
Children w/Worker	16%	10%	0.862
Home Country	Guatemala (44%) Honduras (24%) Mexico (16%) El Salvador (12%) Columbia (4%)	Mexico (70%) Honduras (30%)	0.013
Religious Preference	Evangelical (52% Catholicism (32%) Other (16%)	Catholic (70%) Evangelical (30%)	0.181
Highest Educational Level	6th grade or lower (52%)	6th grade or lower (70%)	0.236
English-speaking skills deficiency	92%	100%	0.357
Type Dwelling; Rental	Apartment (96%) House (4%)	House (70%) Apartment (20%) Mobile Home (10%)	0.000
Type Transportation	Walk (60%) Public Bus (24%)	Personal Auto (50%) Walk (30%)	0.005 0.089
Average Hours at Site	11 hours per day	5.5 hours per day	0.000
# Days per week	6 days per week	6 days per week	0.516

Source: *Houston, Huntsville Undocumented day Laborers Survey, December 2011.

The metropolitan group's modal religious affiliation was reported as Evangelical Protestant (52 percent) compared to the nonmetropolitan group that reported a Catholic affiliation (70 percent). There was also a significant difference between the two groups year of arrival in Texas ($X^2 < 0.02$), with Houston day laborers arriving in 2007 compared to Huntsville workers who arrived in 2004 or earlier.Nearly every subject interviewed in the two locations had minimal English-speaking skills; a majority of those interviewed reported a sixth grade education or less in their home countries before migrating to Texas.

Practical Experiences and Social Fields
Table 2 presents a summary of the two group's lived experiences and association with various social fields. The closed-ended portion of the survey asked workers a straightforward yes or no question to

whether they worried about having enough food, 2) worried about not being able to pay rent, 3) felt daily stress, 4) experienced loneliness, and 5) had feelings of hopelessness. Workers then elaborated about their experiences or feelings. Social capital variables were constructed from their responses to: 1) family helped to secure a job, 2) family helped with a place to live, 3) workers' felt safe with other day laborers; 4) workers' trusted others (non-workers) in the community, and 5) participated in English language classes. Social field experiences were inferred from workers' responses to 1) wage exploitation, including wage theft by race of employers, 2) current health problems; 3) visits to medical clinics, and 3) contacts with other social services organizations, including church outreach groups.

Table 2. Hispanic Male Day Laborers Practical Experiences: Houston and Huntsville

	Houston (N= 25)	Huntsville (N = 10)	X^2 test of Significance
Not Enough Food	84%	90%	0.64
Worry about Rent	76%	100%	0.10
Health Issues	24%	20%	0.80
Visit Medical Clinics	12%	10%	0.52
Work Center	08%	0.0%	0.40
Food Banks	12%	0.0%	0.25
Shelters	0.0%	0.0%	0.00
Church Outreach	04%	10%	0.50
Attend English Class	24%	10%	0.40
Feel Stress Daily	58.3%	10%	0.007
Feel Lonely Daily	60%	50%	0.60
Feel Hopeless	04%	10%	0.10
Family Support to Find Work	60%	48%	0.01
Family Support to Find Residence	16%	10%	0.13
Feel Safe w/other Day Laborers	90%	60%	0.08
Feel Safe in Community	36%	10%	0.124
Employer's Race:			
White	60%	80%	0.13
Hispanic	28%	20%	0.58
Asian	08%	0.0%	0.00
African-American	04%	0.0%	0.00
Employer Wage Disputes by Race:			
White	5.6%	0.0%	X^2 differences in
Hispanic	55.6%	100%	location for wage
Asian	11.2%	0.0%	disputes, all races =
African-American	44%	0.0%	0.001

Source: *Houston, Huntsville Undocumented day Laborers Survey, December 2011.

Examining the Lives of Undocumented Day Laborers in a Southeast Texas Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Setting

The chi-square test of significance shows that reports of stress were significantly different by location ($X^2<0.007$), 58 percent of Houston (metropolitan) workers report feeling stressed compared to only 10 percent of the Huntsville (nonmetropolitan) subjects. Reports of feeling lonely were not significantly different for the two groups – subjects in each group report feeling lonely (60 percent of the Houston subjects and 50 percent of the Huntsville group); interestingly, neither group reports feeling hopelessness (Houston = 4 percent, Huntsville = 10 percent). This finding will be explored more in the discussion section. Both groups overwhelmingly reported concerns with food insecurity (84 percent of Houston workers and 90 percent of the Huntsville workers). Nearly 25 percent of each group reported current health issues and less than 15 percent of the groups sampled had visited a medical clinic.

Work and Community
As shown in Table 2, there are no significant differences between the metropolitan and nonmetropolitan day laborers ranking of their temporary job offers and work experiences (construction = 74.3 percent; landscaping = 34.3 percent; and odd jobs = 31.4 percent). This contradicts previous research findings that undocumented immigrants in nonmetropolitan places work primarily in agriculture. However, the Huntsville location is situated between several major state highways and a major interstate freeway that is undergoing long-term road expansion and this could explain the difference in occupational choices in the sampled nonmetropolitan site. Houston workers reported wage disputes with employers of each racial category compared to the Huntsville group; however, both groups reported most wage disputes or "cheating" occurred when the employer was a non-white Hispanic. Houston workers wait on average 11 hours a day compared to Huntsville works who wait on average 5.5 hours a day before gaining a job offer. This appears reasonable because the Houston job sites have more than 100 workers soliciting work on any given day.

Social Capital Resources
There is a significant difference between the two locations when subjects were asked if they could rely on their family network to help them find employment ($X^2<0.01$). About 60 percent of Houston day laborers reported receiving help from family members in their job seeking efforts compared to only 48 percent of the Huntsville group. Although both groups report feeling safe during their waiting periods with other day laborers at their respective job pickup sites (Houston, 90 percent; Huntsville, 60 percent), both groups reported distrusting *others* in their communities (Houston, 64 percent; Huntsville, 90 percent).

Accessing Social Services
Social services use – homeless shelters, food banks, church outreach, medical clinics, and day laborer work centers – are conceptualized as places where bridging social capital exchanges are more important in workers' respective community fields. However, undocumented day laborers' relationships with community organizations and social services agencies were minimal at best, with the Houston workers more likely to attend an English-speaking class (24 percent) and seek help from food banks (12 percent) compared to the Huntsville workers, who were more likely to rely on religious-affiliated outreach groups for assistance.

Law Enforcement and Immigration
Of the total sample, only 24 percent report an encounter with federal immigration officers. Of those having an encounter, 67 percent reported fair treatment versus 33 percent who reported unfair treatment. However, Huntsville's day laborers reported no encounters with immigration officials or encounters with local law enforcement. A correlation analysis of the total sample shows a significant negative relationship (r = - 0.357; p < 0.04) between encounters with U.S. Immigration and Control Enforcement (ICE) and a respondent's age, i.e., younger Hispanic workers were more likely to have had an ICE encounter than older workers. Consequently, encounters with ICE officials are positively correlated with their deportation (r = 0.549; p <0.001) and appears to confirm prior undocumented workers' reports that

contact with law enforcement officials would result in imprisonment and/or deportation (see Fussell 2011; Cleaveland 2010).

Reports of Feeling Stressed

Metropolitan and nonmetropolitan participants reported feeling "a lot of stress each day", but the differences in the rate of reporting by location was significant ($X^2 < 0.007$) – 58.3 percent for the metropolitan group versus 10 percent for the nonmetropolitan group. Typical narratives for both groups described feeling stress linked to their food insecurity, separation from family members in their home country, having enough income to support themselves and their families in their home country, finding daily work, and paying their housing costs. However, metropolitan respondents in contrast to the nonmetropolitan group also reported potential police harassment as another significant cause of stress in their daily lives.

Family Network and Support

Huntsville participants reported their local family ties provided a feeling of personal support by encouraging their job seeking efforts. They reported that extended family offered food, money, transportation, and job contacts that usually resulted in their getting regular employment with local contractors. Additionally, Huntsville day laborers reported explained that on some occasions a day laborer would allow another day laborer to work in their place to so that person could make enough money to help with food and housing costs. Workers agreed that this was necessary because as a group they shared the same daily struggles and lived in the same neighborhoods.

The Houston group's responses were similar to the Huntsville group, confirming the importance of local family support as a necessary bonding social capital resource for newly arriving undocumented workers. In both communities, workers explained that family networks afforded them enough support to continue their job-seeking efforts.

Reports of Loneliness

Houston participants reported an acute sense of loneliness during religious or local holidays in Texas. Some participants explained that their sense of loneliness became pronounced during holiday festivals or holiday breaks because they were less likely to find work. Houston workers further explained that without a daily job, most could not afford to venture far from their residences because of a lack of funds and felt anxiety about being seen in public places. This indicates another practical contradiction for undocumented day laborers. They migrated to make enough income to help support their families in their countries of origin, but their social capital resources in Texas appear not fungible outside their immediate social fields – a latent consequence of their marginalization as undocumented workers.

Reports of Hopelessness

Participants from Houston and Huntsville were asked if they felt a sense of hopelessness. Because the English phrase is difficult to convey, two Mexican informers who had experience working with Mexican immigrants from rural communities in Mexico, suggested using the Spanish phrase: *Do you ever wish you could lie down and not have to get up again,* to imply feelings of hopelessness. Interestingly, few respondents acknowledged feeling hopeless since their arrival in Texas.

5. Discussion

Day Laborers' Practical Existence

This research project examined undocumented day laborers' lives and the practical consequences of their marginalized status in a metropolitan and nonmetropolitan Texas community, including undocumented day laborers' social experiences and use of community services. The significance of the data findings revealed that the interpersonal, group exchanges and ecological environs of day laborers varied by community place, but their undocumented status and marginalization experiences are similar.

Additionally, the data analysis confirmed Cheung et al.'s (2011) study of the practical experiences of undocumented day laborers in Houston, Texas, that found subjects reported feelings of loneliness because of separation from their families, marginalization through discriminatory actions by local law enforcement, and stigmatization through the unfair treatment at the hands of their employers.

The research presented may offer an additional caveat: the foundation of marginalization and exclusion that structures the undocumented workers' agency may also help forge trust among groups of unauthorized immigrants as they compete and work with each other to survive regardless of their different cultural heritages (Nannestadet al. 2008; DeFilippis 2001). The findings show that nonmetropolitan workers' were a more homogenous group in terms of their country of origin (Mexico) compared to the metropolitan group who migrated from Guatemala and Honduras. The Huntsville day laborers are older, arrived in the country much earlier, tended to be Catholic, and rented houses instead of apartments. However, the daily practical experiences although similar to metropolitan day laborers, were *much less stressful*. Both groups suffered from food insecurity, paying for housing, and feeling lonely. However, nonmetropolitan workers were more likely to demonstrate group solidarity and strong social bonding capital within their work and neighborhood social fields. For example, day laborers in Huntsville reported sharing jobs to ensure other their peers could work and meet their subsistence requirements.

Destination Migration and Human Capital

The choice of destination appears to vary by country of origin and types of social capital resources available for different migrant workers. Our finding confirms prior immigration studies that posit undocumented workers migration location choices are significantly associated with their existing human capital resources, prior migration history linked to their country of origin, and the type of occupations in place or may be developing in the communities they migrate to (Farmer and Moon, 2009, 2011; Lichter 2012, Crowley and Lichter 2009). However, Huntsville day laborers have extended family networks (48 percent) that indicate they have resided long enough in the local community to establish family capital that is now available for exchange with community members from their regions of origin. Thus family members in Mexico could rely on Huntsville workers' family relationships for future migration efforts, establishing relations of social reciprocity that could bolster their long-term community ties locally and in their country of origin.

The Houston day laborers countries of origin were primarily Honduras and Guatemala and as a group, the undocumented workers reported different social fields of experience compared to the Huntsville workers. Houston's undocumented workers were more likely to report wage disputes or theft than their nonmetropolitan peers; this finding corresponds directly with other studies that point out that it is the juridical marginalization and racial stigmatization that fosters the exploitation and victimization of Hispanic day laborers. Fussell's (2011) detailed study examined the dynamics of deportation threats and the targeted victimization of Latino migrants following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana. Fussell found that Latino day laborers were victimized by employers and thieves who inferred their unauthorized status based on their poor English-speaking skills and racial physical characteristics – a stigmatization that is contagious to all Latinos in New Orleans.

Our findings for this project are also similar to Blanchard et al.'s (2011) study of migration patterns of Hondurans to the United States. The author posits that Honduran undocumented laborers are establishing cumulative "feedback loops, including migration networks" to secure their migration destinations in the future (2011:78). Blanchard et al.'s findings also show the social distribution of Central American undocumented workers' human capital as similar to those participants surveyed in Houston, including their established family relations, minimal use of social outreach programs, and their use of social capital to establish employment options to manage successfully their practical existence.

6. Conclusion

This project set out to document the practical life experiences of undocumented non-white Hispanic male day laborers in Houston and Huntsville, Texas, and answer the following questions: Are the socio-demographic characteristics of undocumented day laborers different by community place? Are there differences in undocumented day laborers' human capital and social capital resources by migration destination? Do undocumented workers perceive their lives as marginalized and are they alienated from their host communities? Are there indicators that undocumented day laborers are less likely or more likely to demonstrate bonding and bridging social capital in communities that are nonmetropolitan or metropolitan?

Based on an interactional community field theory approach, we find unequal distribution of human capital resources allocation and social capital formation across community fields of interaction in the nonmetropolitan and metropolitan community places surveyed. The results reveal that undocumented workers develop bonding social capital but weak bridging social capital resources within their respective community fields. Their weak community ties appear linked to their marginalized legal status and the stigma associated with their racial and economic attributes (Williams and Carter-Sowell 2009). We asked early in our research if undocumented workers perceived their lives as marginalized. The survey results show that within their social fields, day laborers are less likely to form sustainable public and private social relationships. Essentially, their lack of interaction (bridging) across social fields acts as a barrier to the emergence of community relations. Further research at the community level needs to consider multicultural differences among metropolitan undocumented workers. For example, industrial systems produce marginalization because of the unequal distribution of social status linked to production processes (Kerbo 2012), but at the practical level, how does marginalization undermine solidarity across distinct cultural groups and thus weaken day laborers access to adequate humanitarian care in their respective communities.

The governing institutions that sit at the center of political and economic relations and the undocumented workers that remain on the periphery of the reproduction process represent a dialectical enterprise that produces variable consequences linked to the cultural production of community relations in rural and urban settings. Similarly, the labor market conditions undocumented day laborers are embedded in mirror monopsonistic labor forms that structure their marginalization, exploitation, and stigmatization (Hotchkiss and Quispe-Agnoli 2009). Our study findings demonstrate that undocumented workers' social field experiences and their minimal social capital resources threaten to reproduce their lived experiences as shadowy apparitions, phantoms that lie outside normative expectations of social justice and community inclusion.

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