

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

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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.*