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ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN RURAL CALIFORNIA

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ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE AND THE MEXICAN ECONOMY

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DISCUSSION BI-NATIONAL ASPECTS OF CALIFORNIA RURAL LABOR

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served to justify the relationship of inequality between European and Third World peoples" (ibid.:181).[4] Myths are not necessarily totally false, but, even as partial fictions implying prescriptions for action for those who believe them, they can be and often are tools for domination and exploitation and a principal means of political practice (see Barthes 1972).

The goals of "official" policy are themselves contradictory. A society socializes its members to fulfill certain social and economic tasks considered important by its leaders and opinion setters. Among these tasks in a highly industrialized capitalist society such as the United States is the training and equipping of people to fill all necessary economic roles, including farm work. It is in the specific interests of sectors of California society and economy to ensure that most Latino migrant and immigrant farm workers do *not* assimilate or acculturate by taking on the education, linguistic skills, behavior and other characteristics and aspirations of Anglos.

> To the U.S. economy the entry of illegal aliens is profitable in at least three ways: the employment of officials to apprehend, care for, and expel the aliens; the money that the aliens spend before being apprehended; and [most importantly] the cheap labor which the aliens represent (Samora 1971:5).

It is no accident that first the term *mojado*, or "wetback," and more recently "alien," labels which evoke images of the less than human, popularly denote and describe the undocumented workers who enable California growers and business people, rural and urban alike, to operate profitable enterprises and allow United States consumers to purchase relatively inexpensive commodities.

Citizen Latinos, regardless of their language, cultural, or educational skills also continue to fill the more menial and low-paying jobs in California (and elsewhere). Even in the same jobs, they are systematically exploited, earning less than equally qualified Anglos, a reality they generally recognize (Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi 1986:113-114). Acculturation does not equal parity.

Baca and Bryan (1983:2) note that " . . . common to all outcomes of assimilation is the assumption that an increase in length of residence in the host society entails denationalization, a view of U. S. society moving in the direction of inevitably attaining an all-inclusive sense of nationality or peoplehood," an observation which suggests that assimilation as ideology is doubly determined. There is first the ethnocentric assumption of the cultural superiority of the "receiving" society. But beyond cultural chauvinism is a state imperative to insure the uncontested imagining of a homogeneous national community (Anderson 1983). In other words, the function of the state as a purveyor of images of society is to present the nation as, if not culturally homogeneous and unified, at least moving inexorably in that direction. Thus, insofar as the production of any theory or policy is consistent with this charge, it mutes and even denies the reality, possibility, or desirability of persistent ethnic diversity. Baca and Bryan in effect observe that "assimilationism" is part of a discourse, "of [an] order that supports the status quo and diverts attention away from possible contradictions that challenge it. Other terms in this [discourse] of order include: cultural deprivation, immigrant adjustment, mainstreaming, limited English proficiency, and the like" (Baca and Bryan 1983:18). Thus, in the very language of public discourse can be found official theory in the service of official policy.

Conditions in California Labor Markets

A number of forces and conditions come together in the lives of transnational migrants that mitigate against their assimilation into the United States non-low-income mainstream even if that were their goal. Segmented labor market models contrast with the assimilation model and provide some critical insight.[7] Speaking of the unauthorized Mexican workers they studied in Los Angeles, Baca and Bryan say that they ". . .are simply not working-class members of a larger Mexican-American community; they constitute an underclass permanently locked into a secondary labor market" (Baca and Bryan 1983:16; see Fernández Kelly 1983). Add to the secondary labor market the highly competitive nature of the industries that employ foreign workers and the relatively unskilled nature of the work, and the exploitation intensifies (O'Connor 1973). Agricultural wage labor is toward the bottom of the secondary labor markets where it in effect constitutes tertiary segmentation. It is into these lower strata of the secondary and tertiary labor markets that the California-bound Mexican farm workers are directed. The lower levels of the segmented labor market are notoriously difficult even for United States citizens to escape; for Mexican nationals in United States labor markets it is virtually impossible, given their lack of marketable skills, their unfamiliarity with the language, culture and institutions and especially their legal status. Living as undocumented workers constantly in fear of apprehension by authorities and repatriation to their country of origin causes such workers to strive to make themselves as invisible as possible and the least visible work places are in agricultural fields, restaurant kitchens, garment factories, and similar secondary and tertiary labor market locations. These circumstances add up to abysmal living and working conditions: viz., exposure to potentially lethal pesticides; minimum and below minimum wages for back-breaking work; no job security; the need to be constantly on the move following jobs; inadequate or non-existent housing, education for children and health care; the constant fear of repatriation; and the everyday discrimination experienced by all minorities.

California agriculture is unique in the United States in terms of the relative insignificance of small, family farms and the corresponding prevalence of agribusiness (Runsten and LeVeen 1981). Like all corporate business, decisions are made to insure maximum profit and maximum efficiency, decisions which include the use of a mix of technology and labor. Labor markets in California agriculture are increasingly shaped by the imperatives of the competitive global economy, which brings the state's industries into ever sharper competition with overseas counterparts. After decades of technological intensification at the expense of labor (Friedland, Barton and Thomas 1981; Hightower 1978), commercial agriculture in some parts of the state is beginning to shift back to more labor-intensive cropping (Palerm n.d.b), in part as a response to heightened international competition. Always dependent on a cheap foreign "peasant" labor force, present cropping and marketing trends appear to be maintaining this dependence. Growers claim, and there is reason to assume that they are correct, that they cannot raise wages to the point that would attract domestic workers and still remain competitive in international markets. There are thus strong structural forces at work that will insure the need for a largely foreign, preferably illegal, work force in California agriculture for some time to come. Undocumented workers who eventually achieve legal status and "assimilate" by, among other things, accurately assessing the legal and social structure of United States society, learning English, becoming aware of wages and benefits paid to domestic workers, and demanding these and decent living and working conditions for themselves, are less desirable to employers that compete in the global marketplace.

Therefore, with all the rhetoric about the desirability of assimilation, it is not what a significant proportion of Californian employers want for their work force.

The strength and importance of the articulationist perspective, nested within that of the internationalization of capital, is that, in addition to global economics, it also draws our attention to the domestic economy of rural Mexican communities and households and their reproduction in both urban and rural enclaves in California. At this level it explores linkages between such low income communities in Mexico and their daughter communities in developed areas.

Enclavement: Rural and Urban

Attention has recently been refocused on Black ghettos on the twentieth anniversary of the report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (known as the Kerner Commission). In its 1968 report the Commission drew attention to the plight of inner city Black communities and warned that the country was heading "toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal." There is general consensus that the widespread poverty, unemployment, and despair that were endemic in Black ghettos of the 1960s are still prevalent, although there has been a sizable growth in the Black middle class outside of the ghetto.[8]

In a much publicized book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, William Wilson (1987) argues that inner city Black ghettos have experienced an exodus of the Black middle class, leaving them without the benefit of the services and identities that the middle class formerly provided. While Wilson's book has been heavily criticized on the grounds that *inter alia* there never was a large middle class in the ghettos in the first place, the persistence of ghettos suggests that aspects of United States society and economy are capable of maintaining enclaves of oppressed citizen groups who speak English as a first language and are presumed to share at least to some degree the "American way of life." This being the case, the formation of and persistence of enclaves predicated on immigration/migration, much of it illegal, and inhabited by foreign, non-English speaking and culturally different migrants was perhaps predictable.

The intersection of the internationalization of capital and the articulation perspectives casts some light on the formation of contemporary ethnic enclaves. Research within this paradigm suggests two general trends that occur in transnational labor exporting-importing systems: "differentiation of the periphery" (Wallerstein 1974) and, to use Sassen-Koob's (1982) term, "peripheralization at the core." By differentiation of the periphery we refer to the processes whereby variants of the domestic or non-capitalist economy in peripheral areas are recreated, even as these rural economies become more integrated primarily via migratory wage labor with those of developed regions. Peripheralization of the core refers to the recreation of basic aspects of underdeveloped peripheral communities within the developed centers that import migrant and immigrant workers. For example, Sassen-Koob (1983) shows how New York City's recent fiscal crisis was solved in large part by importing a large number of new migrants and immigrants to work in a garment industry made moribund by its inability to compete with production costs in Third World countries. That these workers were forced to accept low wages and living conditions analogous to those of the periphery made the revival of the industry in New York possible. The solution, in other words, was to recreate Third World enclaves and Third World production arrangements -- of which cheap labor is the key

input – in New York City. Similar enclaves of Latin Americans, primarily Mexican and Central American workers, are located in the garment district of Los Angeles.

Scholars who have examined Mexican urban enclaves refer to "barrioization" (Saragoza 1983:120). Camarillo (1979:78) notes that Mexicans and Mexican Americans have responded to economic oppression and discrimination by "insulating themselves in the barrio and by modifying and adapting their community to the new circumstances they faced" (from Saragoza 1983:120), a process Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi (1986) call "secondary cultural discontinuity." Secondary cultural discontinuity occurs among "caste-like minorities" such as Mexican Americans, Blacks, and Native Americans whom the authors contrast with "immigrant minorities." "Caste-like minorities" are those who

> have been incorporated into society more or less *involuntarily* and *permanently* through slavery, conquest, or colonization and then relegated to menial status . . . . Mexican Americans in the southwestern United States were incorporated by conquest; people who later immigrated from Mexico were accorded the subordinate status of the conquered group (Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi 1986:90).

Other immigrant minorities such as Asians, in contrast, have come to the United States voluntarily, usually in order to improve their economic status. Ordinarily, they can return home, albeit with some difficulty, if they wish. While they suffer the same discrimination and exploitation as "caste-like minorities," they respond differently because in spite of exploitation, their economic condition usually *has* improved and because their frame of reference is their place of origin. Hence they tend not to internalize the dominant group's denigration and rationalization for the exploitation they suffer. Essentially, they attempt to "fit in" in the United States, adopting many of the behavioral characteristics of Anglos, characteristics which they can imagine being of benefit if and when they return home and even if they remain in the United States.

Caste-like minorities such as Blacks and Mexican Americans, on the other hand, have no real place of origin to return to and do internalize the racism and ethnocentrism directed towards them. Consequently, they devise a set of culturally specific strategies that are at odds with the social norms of the dominant Anglo culture. Some of these strategies are labeled "deviant," others manifestations of "tradition" used in a negative connotation to mean "backward" (Nagengast and Kearney n.d.). These strategies, however, are survival mechanisms that make sense in the oppressive and exploitive world in which they find themselves and which they cannot envision escaping. As such they constitute a form of resistance. We will return to the implications of these strategies below in the context of ethnicity and opposition.

Palerm (n.d.b) also suggests that rural enclavement or barrioization of Mexican and Mexican Americans in rural California is analogous to the kind of inner city enclavements that Wilson describes in contemporary Black ghettos. According to Palerm, the Latino farm worker population has grown sharply in over 130 rural California communities; in some of them Latinos are now the majority (cf. Carlos 1987). The typical pattern is for the settlement of largely non-citizen Latino newcomers to coincide with a simultaneous "white flight." An already disproportionately small middle-class which tends to relocate to emerging urban centers renders some rural towns increasingly in the control of absentee landlords. Many of these towns consequently have undergone and are undergoing a process of dedevelopment.

As tax bases and businesses decline, housing, public services, and infrastructure deteriorate. Chronic poverty is endemic among the remaining inhabitants who generally are poorly educated, speak little or no English, and have few occupational skills that would enable them to move out of the secondary or tertiary agricultural labor market. In terms of social ecology and economy, such rural enclaves, like inner city Black ghettos, no longer function as coherent com-munities.

The decline of services and of infrastructure in rural California enclaves located in small towns, which were in the past predominantly Anglo, is in large part explained by central place theory which predicts that certain towns will become primary centers of commerce and services. It is in such towns that developers will invest in shopping malls, department stores, and where most professionals will locate. As these areas attain more economic and demographic mass, they attract yet more development, services, and population. In towns not so favored, small businesses and their middle class proprietors are marginalized and eventually are either forced out of the market or relocate to primary towns, thus becoming part of a combined process of concentration and marginalization. Whereas the towns that are experiencing marginalization were formerly full service towns they now resemble labor camps, i.e., rural dormitories for migrant and immigrant farm workers. Gutted as they are of their services, infrastructure, and their middle class, many rural towns are becoming ethnic enclaves, a structural process of transformation similar to that of contemporary urban ghettoization (García n.d.).

V. ECOLOGY OF THE TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY

We now turn to an exploration of the processes of ethnic minority enclavement in rural California with respect to household development cycles, to gender, to human rights, and to the formation of ethnicity as a means of self defense and self-identification. In each case we will refer to the links between California and Mexico, elaborating on our theme that neither California nor Mexican rural enclaves in which international migrants are a feature can be understood in spatial, social, or theoretical isolation. This is not to say that all aspects of all Latino communities in rural California have a strong transnational dimension to them. But it is to argue that such communities cannot be comprehended without an awareness of this dimension.

Household Developmental Cycles

The "family" has been a major research focus since the inception of the study of the Latino community in California. Alfredo Mirandé (1982:1) notes that, "Perhaps no institution has been more intensely analyzed, studied, and discussed, yet so thoroughly misunderstood as the Chicano family." As traced by Mirandé (1982), Baca Zinn (1983), Saragoza (1983), Ybarra (1983), and Zavella (1987:11-15), the study of Chicano families has gone through the sequence of theoretical and ideological phases outlined at the beginning of this paper. The assimilationist-functionalist phase, which was developed mainly by non-Chicano scholars, focused heavily on what have since been recognized as stereotyped gender roles, especially an academic concept of machismo, seen as "a perverted form of masculinity" used by non-Chicano scholars "to explain most of the problems faced not only by the Chicano family but Chicanos themselves" (Mirandé 1982:1). The second phase, largely a corrective to this stereotype, tended to replace earlier interpretations "with overly idealized and romanticized

gender is emerging which, in addition to examining the relationship of gender to the family and households, also examines it in the work place. The interactive effects of family and workplace on gender identity and the role of human agency is increasingly the concern of some Chicana scholars who employ socialist feminist theory to examine the linkages between capitalist relations in the public sphere and patriarchal family relations. Zavella (1987) calls attention to how,

> Women . . . are simultaneously wage workers, women workers, and family members. The relationship between women's wage labor and 'private' domestic labor is obscured under capitalism . . . and comprises two major processes: the family's influence on female labor-force participation and the effect of wage work on women's roles within the families (Zavella 1987:2).

Reviewing the literature on women's employment and decision-making within Chicano families, Zavella (ibid.:130-133) observes that recent research suggests that women gain power and autonomy when they become employed and that therefore Chicana families are more 'egalitarian' when wives work. Lea Ybarra (1982a, 1982b) claims that such couples are more likely to have egalitarian values in regard to the household division of labor and to act on those values, an interpretation supported by Hawkes and Taylor (1975) and Baca Zinn (1980). Consistent with post-adaptionist approaches which see the family as an arena in which there may be not only cooperation but contention for power, Zavella (1987) questions the conclusions of research which uncritically characterizes women's work as having positive effects on the family. In the case of seasonal work, the linkages between the structure of labor markets and the household are actually more complex. For example, the research to which she refers does not distinguish between full-time and part-time/seasonal workers (such as the cannery workers that she studied).

> Rather than the increase in marital influence reported in these studies, I found that, to the extent that company practices keep women in 'women's jobs', Chicana workers will have difficulties effecting changes at home. Like other minority women workers, Chicanas seem to be at risk, since they are concentrated in declining industries or in occupations slated for elimination because of changing technology (ibid.:xvi).

Moreover, some unions are complicit "in limiting women's participation in the labor market. Unions often exclude women from training programs and generally support protective legislation that denies women access to difficult 'male' jobs" (ibid.:4). Describing other recent research on the various ways in which Chicana/Latina women combine wage and family work, Zavella calls for continuing research, within the socialist feminist paradigm, on the two-way relationship between women's work and family.

Ethnicity

Enclavement is a result of macro-economic and transnational structural processes that intersect with class and "race." The enclave so formed is the crucible in which ethnicity is nurtured. This ethnicity thus becomes yet another marker for self-identification and for objectification of the self by the other. As such, ethnicity doubly determines enclavement. Such otherness also becomes the target of and is reinforced by the racism which is so deeply

ingrained in Anglo rural California. Saragoza (1983:120) discusses how proximity to Mexico resulted in a high degree of transiency which, "slowed and diluted the incorporation of Mexicans into the fabric of industrial capitalism in early twentieth century America." He adds that, "If transiency was not enough, segregation maintained the general isolation of the Mexican community. This was most obvious in *rural agricultural* areas where the effects of class and race created a polarized ambience" (ibid., emphasis added), suggesting that the dynamics of rural communities promote perhaps even greater enclavement than those of urban areas.

Three integrally related structural conditions promote the persistence of Latino ethnicity in California. One of these is the formation of enclaves, rural and urban, under conditions already outlined; the second is labor market segregation, also discussed above. Effectively isolated from mainstream Anglo society, culture, and work, the ethnic identity of both sojourner and permanent resident workers is maintained by living and working in "Mexican" ambiances, regardless of whether they are on this side of the border or the other. The third structural condition perpetuating Latino ethnicity is "replenishment." European immigrant communities – which were not replenished by infusions of new immigrants after the early decades of the twentieth century – maintained their ethnic distinctiveness through oppositional relationships with other groups, a phenomenon especially prevalent where a strong "racial" opposition maps onto the ethnic. Oppositional conditions also maintain Latino ethnicity in California, but Latino enclaves are augmented by the regular arrival of persons socialized in Mexico. Newcomers generally enter the lower strata of the secondary and tertiary labor markets, and with time some (as individuals and families), move upwards in these labor markets, with a few escaping into primary labor markets. The point is, however, that those individuals and families who move up and out of lower strata are replaced by new arrivals, a process Mines and Kearney (1982) refer to as "flow-through" in which some members of the community undergo socioeconomic and cultural differentiation even as the more general structure of the community is simultaneously replicated.

Saragoza, discussing Mexican children in the San Joaquin Valley, invokes a similar flow-through model.

> Continuing immigration from Mexico posed two problems. First, the new immigrants replenished the cultural base of the resident Mexican population. Within the context of established Chicano communities, the new arrivals became the "Mexicans" while older residents were relegated to becoming the "Mexican Americans." Secondly, and more importantly, the new immigrants' children created a distinct group among the children of previous and more Americanized immigrants: a distinction rarely missed among Chicanos but frequently ignored or unrecognized by non-Chicanos. (Saragoza 1982:66)

What is more, the Mexican American cultural frame of reference, especially after World War II, emphasized Mexican-based identity in *opposition* to an Anglo-based one. Mexican identity arose primarily because of a realistic assessment of opportunities in the Anglo dominated segmented labor market – a result of historical and structural conditions that constrain the economic and social prospects of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as a group. Within this frame of reference, Mexican Americans consciously resist practices, orientations, and behaviors they perceive as detrimental to their Mexican identity and threatening to Mexican

the South Coast and North San Joaquin Valley regions (2.9 and 2.6 times the average for all other crops and regions, respectively). By contrast, it is well below average in the Inland Southern California region. Grapes and tree fruit are the other two crops with high concentrations of illegal workers. For grapes, the Inland Southern California average is just two-thirds the average for all other crop/region combinations, while the San Joaquin Valley and North Coast regions are well above average. Concentrations of undocumented workers in tree fruit are above average in the San Joaquin Valley regions and well below average in both the Sacramento and the Central Coast regions. In crops that do not rely heavily on illegal immigrant labor, average concentrations tend to be highest in the South San Joaquin and Sacramento Valley counties.

The bottom row of the table shows average relative concentrations of illegal workers by region. The concentrations of illegal workers are lowest in Inland Southern California and in the South Coast, Central Coast and Sacramento Valley regions. Reliance on illegal workers is highest in the San Joaquin Valley, North Coast and "Other" counties. The North Coast region has an above-average concentration of illegal workers primarily because it is a major producer of wine grapes, which depend heavily on undocumented workers.

Table 2
Concentrations of Undocumented Farmworkers by Crop and Region in California (August 1983)

Region / Crop	South Coast	Inland So. CA	Central Coast	So. San Joaquin	No. San Joaquin	Sacra-mento	North Coast	Other CA	All Regions
CITRUS	2.89	0.60	--	3.24	2.57	--	--	--	2.35**
GRAPES	--	0.66	--	1.47	1.60	--	1.89	3.42	1.60**
OTHER TREE FRUIT	--	--	0.79	1.47	1.88	0.62	1.93	2.57	1.51**
NUTS	--	--	--	0.93	1.83	1.28	--	--	1.30
FIELD VEGETABLES	0.56	0.10	0.81	1.27	0.38	1.13	0.30	1.40	0.60**
FIELD FRUITS	0.26	--	0.81	1.03	0.57	1.28	--	1.03	0.52*
OTHER	--	--	0.64	0.57	0.54	0.43	1.03	--	0.43**
ALL CROPS	0.70*	0.24**	0.79	1.62**	1.05	0.94	1.30	1.37	1.00

Source: Taylor and Espenshade (1987)

* (**)Denotes that an average is significantly different from the average for all other crops or regions at the .10 (.05) level of significance.

The numbers in the table are the ratios of the concentration in each crop and region to the concentration in all other crops and regions. A blank entry indicates a sample size smaller than 10 in the corresponding cell. These are inevitable due to the uneven geographic distribution of some crops.

Seasonal Changes in the Distribution of Undocumented Farmworkers

The findings presented in Tables 1 and 2 present a snapshot of the distribution of the California farm workforce across crops and regions at the peak of the farm labor season in August 1983. As the farm labor season unfolds, the distribution of undocumented workers evolves to reflect changing seasonal labor demands in the state. One of the most salient features of California's undocumented farm workforce is its high degree of responsiveness to seasonal changes in labor demand in low-skill, low-paying farm jobs.

In addition to information on current jobs, the UC-EDD survey gathered retrospective data on all farm and nonfarm jobs in which respondents had worked over the 12 months immediately preceding the survey. These retrospective data can be used to construct a recent time profile of work activities for each person in the sample. Because the survey was conducted at the peak of the farm labor season, the retrospective data approximate major changes in the distribution of the California farm workforce from winter through the peak farm labor months. The reliability of retrospective data decreases with time. Therefore, the analysis that follows will be limited to farmworker activities during winter, spring and summer of 1983.[3]

These data suggest that California agriculture is characterized by a two-tiered workforce. On the one hand, a small base tier of farmworkers enjoys relatively stable, high-paying year-round jobs. Of the farmworkers included in the August 1983 UC-EDD survey, 29.8 percent had been employed in the same job for 90 days or more and only 16.1 percent had been on the job 30 weeks or more.

These numbers are consistent with California unemployment insurance data, which indicate that approximately 14 percent of all farmworkers in California had more than 30 weeks of farm employment in 1985.[4] Superimposed upon this relatively permanent workforce is a second, seasonal farm workforce which expands significantly up to the peak farm labor month. As this seasonal component expands, the absolute concentration of undocumented workers increases. The share of the farm workforce classified as "undocumented" increases 25 percent between January and August 1983 (Espenshade and Taylor, 1988). There is also a large increase in the activity of farm labor contractors (FLCs). As both the absolute and relative numbers of undocumented farmworkers increase, there is a 74 percent increase in the the share of farmworkers hired by FLCs instead of by growers, from 15.5 percent in January to 27.1 percent in August. Farm labor contractors, by tapping into migrant networks with villages in Mexico, are able to provide growers with large numbers of inexpensive, low-skill farmworkers on short notice, substantially reducing the risk to growers of relying on a largely illegal workforce.

The undocumented farm workforce is highly fluid, in the sense that the distribution of undocumented workers becomes more or less concentrated in given crops, regions and farm jobs as seasonal changes occur in farm labor demand. During the off-labor months of January and February, undocumented workers are concentrated in citrus (17 percent of the illegal farm workforce), in grapes (35 percent) and in winter vegetables (17 percent). They work primarily in harvesting citrus and winter vegetables (33 percent) and in tree pruning (28 percent). The share of undocumented workers employed in planting peaks during the late winter months, but this activity employs a relatively small share of illegal immigrants (7 percent). Geographically, the largest shares of the undocumented workforce during the winter months are in the Inland Southern California and South Coast regions (19 percent) and in the South San Joaquin Valley (34 percent), where winter vegetable crops are concentrated.

These geographic shifts reflect a major seasonal redistribution of the illegal farm workforce across crops (Panel B of Table 3). The center of the distribution of undocumented workers shifts away from citrus and grapes (at rates of 11.2 and 6.8 percent per month) toward noncitrus tree fruits and field vegetables, which increase their claim on the undocumented farm workforce by 7.1 percent and 7.7 percent per month, respectively. The share of undocumented workers in field fruits -- a minor employer of illegal immigrants – rises substantially, at a rate of 21.5 percent per month. Thus, the seasonal evolution of the farm labor market is such that, with the exception of field vegetables, crops that are the major employers of undocumented workers claim a decreasing share of undocumented workers as the peak farm labor season approaches, while crops that have the smallest concentrations of undocumented workers claim an increasing share of the illegal immigrant workforce.[5] Even so, Table 2 shows that in August, citrus and grapes still had significantly above-average concentrations of undocumented immigrants.

The Distribution of Undocumented Workers by Farm Job

California growers rely heavily on undocumented workers to harvest crops (Table 4). However, the largest concentration of illegal workers is not in harvesting, where timing – especially in perishable crops – is likely to be critical. Although the concentration of illegal workers in harvesting is above average, it is much lower than the concentration of illegal farmworkers in tree thinning, and it is not much different from the concentrations of illegals in tree pruning and in irrigating. By contrast, the share of undocumented workers is low in hoeing and thinning of field crops and in crop sorting.

On average, undocumented workers are less likely than legal workers to be assigned to key, semi-skill jobs like machine operation and foreman positions, where their sudden apprehension could have a relatively large adverse effect on production, including the productivity of other workers. Table 4 shows that the share of undocumented workers among machine operators is just 41 percent as large as the share in other tasks. Taylor and Espenshade (1987) report that the share of U.S.-citizen workers is nearly twice as high in machine operation as in all other farm jobs. Foremen are only 30 percent as likely to be illegal aliens as are workers in other jobs. They are at least 39 percent more likely to be legal immigrant workers. Legal Hispanic immigrants, in addition to being proficient Spanish speakers, have a secure legal status which makes them preferable to undocumented workers in foreman positions. Overall, there is little evidence that undocumented workers displace legal workers in foreman and machine-operator jobs.

The job mix of undocumented workers, like the distribution of undocumented workers by crop and region, is seasonal (Table 5). The share of undocumented workers increases in harvesting (4.6 percent per month) and in hoeing of field crops (35.5 percent per month), while it declines sharply in tree pruning (-19.1 percent per month) and in planting (-15.0 percent per month). As the number of undocumented workers in California agriculture increases, the share of illegal workers declines in the relatively skilled machine operator jobs (-5.3 percent per month), and although in relative terms there is a substantial increase in the share of undocumented workers who are foremen, the actual size of this share is still very low in August (0.4 percent). These findings indicate that seasonal growth in the undocumented farm workforce is not absorbed significantly into relatively desirable, semi-skilled farm jobs but instead is channeled primarily into low-skill harvesting and field work. Taylor (1988) reports econometric evidence of segmentation of the California farm labor market along immigration-status lines.

Table 4
Concentrations of Undocumented Workers in the California Hired Farm Labor Force, by Farm Tasks (August 1983)

	Share of Undocumented Workers	Relative Concentration of Undocumented Workers
All Tasks	0.19	1.00
Harvesting	0.25 **	1.62 **
Tree Pruning	0.23	1.22
Tree Thinning	0.42 **	2.19 **
Hoeing	0.10 **	0.48 **
Irrigating	0.28 *	1.50 *
Crop Sorting	0.10 **	0.47 **
Planting	0.14	0.70
Machine Operating	0.09 **	0.41 **
Foremen	0.06 **	0.30 **

Source: Taylor and Espenshade (1987)

* (**) Denotes that an average is significantly different from the average for all other farm jobs at the .10 (.05) level of significance.

The numbers in the last column of the table are the ratios of the concentration in each farm task to the concentration in all other farm tasks.

Table 5
Average Percentage Monthly Changes in the Distribution of Undocumented Workers Across Farm Jobs (January to August 1983)

Harvesting	Tree Pruning	Tree Thinning	Hoeing	Irrigating	Sorting
4.6**	-19.1**	-1.7	35.5**	3.2	16.0

Planting	Machine Operation	Foreman
-15.0**	-5.3*	24.0**

Source: Espenshade and Taylor (1988).

The numbers in the table are obtained from least-squares regressions of the form:

$$\text{Ln}(S_i) = a_i + b_i t + e_i$$

where t=1,...,8 denotes month number and s_i is the share of undocumented workers in crop or region i at time t. The estimated coefficient b_i is the monthly time derivative of the share of undocumented workers employed in i:

$$b_i = (1/S_i)\, ds_i/dt$$

*(**) - Significant at the 0.10 (0.05) level for a two-tailed test.

Summary

The findings reported above highlight the central role that undocumented immigrant workers currently play in the California farm economy. Two characteristics that make undocumented workers critical to the smooth functioning of California agriculture are first, the concentration of undocumented workers in the lowest-skill, poorest-paying farm jobs and second, the considerable fluidity of the undocumented farm workforce, its responsiveness to large seasonal swings in labor demand across regions and farm jobs.

Analysis of the UC-EDD data suggests that the immediate impacts of employer sanctions on California agriculture will not be uniform. It appears that the largest immediate adjustments to employer sanctions will be in citrus, because these crops currently have the highest concentration of illegal immigrants in their workforce. By contrast, field fruits have a relatively low reliance on undocumented workers. Despite the high concentration of undocumented workers in citrus, in one respect citrus growers may be in a favorable position to respond to employer sanctions by switching to a more year-round, legal workforce. Citrus is among the least perishable of all California crops (Kader, 1985); many varieties of citrus can be stored on the tree for several weeks until harvested. Although many relatively perishable crops (e.g., field fruits) rely less on undocumented workers, the loss of even a small share of the workforce can be significant for commodities for which the harvest window is small.