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**CHICANO POLITICAL ELITE PERCEPTIONS OF THE
UNDOCUMENTED WORKER: AN EMPIRICAL
ANALYSIS**

by
Rodolfo O. de la Garza

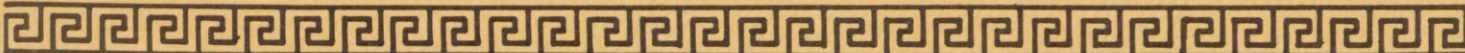
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by

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CHICANO POLITICAL ELITE PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNDOCUMENTED WORKER: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine how Chicano political elites respond to the issue of undocumented workers. Such a study is important for several reasons. First, whatever policies are finally implemented will surely have an effect on the Chicano community, and for that reason alone national decision-makers should consider how Chicano political leaders view the issue. There are few systematic data, however, that tell us how the Chicano community views this issue. Finally, advocates of such policies as guest worker programs and national identity cards reinforce their arguments by stating that their proposals will benefit the nation at large, but will particularly benefit Chicanos. These claims, however, are not accompanied by empirical data reflecting how Chicanos themselves view undocumented immigration. The purpose here, therefore, is to examine how Chicano political leaders react to this issue, and to compare their views with the claims made in behalf of the Chicano community by political leaders and academic analysts. Without such information, it is impossible for national decision-makers to evaluate accurately the policy options presented to them or to formulate any policy that is responsive to Chicano interests as well as to the concern of other groups.

I will begin with a summary of how Chicano attitudes toward undocumented workers are described in historical records and current pro-

posals. Then I will examine how Chicano political elites themselves view this issue and how they assess its impact on the Chicano community. I will then attempt to explain these findings, concluding with some recommendations for Chicano political leaders and for national policy makers. I should emphasize that this is not an empirical examination of the impact of undocumented workers on the U.S. economy or on Chicanos specifically. It is, instead, an analysis of how Chicano political elites perceive this issue and how they suggest dealing with it.

The data presented here are from interviews conducted between June, 1978, and April, 1980, as part of a larger study of Chicano political elites. A total of 241 interviews averaging approximately one hour in length were conducted in Washington, D.C.; El Paso, Austin and San Antonio, Texas; Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico; Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona; Denver, Colorado; and Los Angeles and Sacramento, California. The respondents include 42 appointees in the Carter administration (as of June, 1978), four Congressmen, 42 state legislators and other officials elected state-wide, 33 top-level state appointees (cabinet members, department heads, gubernatorial assistants), 65 community leaders representing 13 types of professional and community organizations, and 25 individuals identified as key community leaders. The organization leaders and community spokespeople interviewed include representatives of groups such as Raza Unida, LULAC, MALDEF, MAPA and Chicano community development organizations, as well as locally prominent groups and individuals in each city visited. Because of cost factors and time considerations, it was impossible to draw a random sample of organizations and spokespeople; nonetheless, every effort was made

to include a broad range of organizations so as to be able to generalize about the views of community leaders with considerable confidence.

"CHICANO VIEWS": HISTORICAL ASSERTIONS

Early in his administration President Carter began responding to domestic pressure which called for controlling Mexican illegal immigration to the United States. He proposed a legislative package to deal with this issue, but it was soundly defeated because supporters of a more restrictive immigration policy thought it too lenient, and opponents of such policy thought it too harsh.¹ The issue was of such salience, however, that Congress appointed a Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy to study the issue and present recommendations early in 1981. That report was issued in March, 1981.

As they evaluate the Select Committee's recommendations and decide how to approach the issue, policy-makers must face three constraints. They must formulate a policy that is sensitive to Mexican political and economic interests.² They must also respond to major American interest groups such as agribusiness and organized labor, which have opposing views. Finally, because Chicanos have the potential to become important political actors, and because any policy aimed at controlling Mexican immigration will have immediate effects on Chicanos, particularly those in the Southwest, policy-makers must be certain to

¹"Illegal Immigration: President's Program," Office of the Attorney General, Washington, D.C., February, 1978; Sidney Weintraub and Stanley R. Ross, The Illegal Alien from Mexico: Policy Choices for an Intractable Issue (Austin: Mexico-United States Border Research Program, University of Texas, 1980).

²Richard Fagen, "The Realities of U.S.-Mexican Relations," Foreign Affairs, Vol 55 (July 1977), pp. 685-700; Richard Fagen, "Mexican Petroleum and U.S. National Security," International Security, July, 1979, pp. 39-53.

consider how Chicanos view the issue and how their decisions will affect Chicanos.³ It is this third constraint which is of interest to us in this paper.

Although there can be no doubt that the presence of Mexican workers has enriched Chicanos culturally and that Chicanos as a community have welcomed Mexicans, whether or not they were legal immigrants, it is also clear that numerous organized Chicano groups have reacted negatively to this influx. Indeed, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the first national organization of Mexican-American citizens, was established in part so that "Americans of Mexican descent" would not be confused with newly arrived "Mexicans."⁴ After World War II, organizations such as the American G.I. Forum, the Colorado Federation of Latin American Groups, the Mexican American Educational Conference Committee, the Bishop's Committee for the Spanish Speaking, and the Illinois Federation of Mexican American Organizations opposed the Bracero program because of its perceived impact on job opportunities and wage levels.⁵ These organizations may have also been reacting to the increased presence of undocumented workers, which the Bracero program accelerated but did not cause.⁶

³The Select Committee's decision not to endorse a national identity card may be due in part to Chicano testimony opposing this measure. See National Task Force on Immigration, "Position Papers on Immigration to the Select Committee on Immigration and Immigration Policy," 1980.

⁴F. Chris García and Rudolph O. de la Garza, The Chicano Political Experience (North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press, 1977). pp. 27-29.

⁵Richard B. Craig, The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971). pp. 142-143, 176-177.

⁶Vernon M. Briggs, Jr., "Labor Market Aspects of Mexican Immigration to the United States in the 1970s," in Stanley Ross, ed., Views Across the Border (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1978). pp. 122-221.

The Bracero program ended in 1964, but the flow of undocumented workers continued. By the 1970s, as had occurred during economic downturns in the 1930s and 1950s,⁷ their presence once again became a major issue. Given that Chicanos had minimal political clout in the 1960s, there is no reason to conclude that the decision to end the Bracero program was, to any significant degree, a response to Chicano demands.⁸ During the 1970s, however, policy-makers have reacted to the presence of undocumented workers in part by emphasizing the negative effect these workers have on the Chicano community, and they are quick to reinforce Chicanos who articulate anti-undocumented worker arguments. Thus, the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Nationality responded warmly to the president of the American G.I. Forum, a well-known Chicano organization when he testified as follows:

The tragedy of both the bracero and the illegal entry policy is that Mexican nationals have been used as a tool of unscrupulous employers to deprive Mexican-Americans of basic permanent jobs and decent wages.⁹

Congressman Peter Rodino, the Subcommittee Chairman, was similarly responsive to testimony from a Chicano Regional Manpower Administrator:

I note in your statement you emphasize the impact that the illegal aliens are having especially here in California, on Mexican-Americans who are citizens. From all that we read they are part of a group that are severely pressed, [even] without the competition they receive from the illegal aliens. So it seems to me that the problem is even more acute, because they are competing against people who already are in distressed circumstances.

⁷ Rodolfo Acuña, Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972). pp. 122-121.

⁸ Acuña suggests that Chicanos played an important role in terminating the Bracero program (Occupied America, p. 224), but as is shown in García and de la Garza, Chicano political resources during the 1960s were so minimal that they were unable to influence such an important decision.

⁹ Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress, First Session, Illegal Aliens, Part 1, Hearings Before Subcommittee No. 1, Washington, D.C., May 5-June 3, 1971, pp. 254-255; see also pp. 240-241, 252-254.

Representative David Dennis reacted similarly:

I emphasize that group that is really hurt the most is the Mexican-American worker in this state [California], and I would venture to say that this is probably true also to a similar extent in other Southwestern states.¹⁰

Non-Chicano officials presented similar testimony. The General Counsel of the California Rural Legal Assistance Program stated:

This is not just a farm problem. It is an urban problem, and Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles and blacks in Watts are the people who are displaced, to the same extent that farmworkers are displaced.¹¹

Like Rodino, Representative James D. McKeivitt responded to this type of statement by pointing out to a representative of the Immigration and Nationalization Service:

There are a number of constituents in my district, the Mexican-Americans, who agree with what you are doing. They are irritated with the Mexican nationals who deprive them of jobs.¹²

Committee members were notably less receptive to witnesses who voiced opposing views, however.¹³

Some scholars have also emphasized the negative impact that undocumented workers allegedly have on the Chicano community. Vernon Briggs has been the most vigorous of this group, but others, including former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall, Sidney Weintraub, and Stanley Ross, make similar arguments. Briggs asserts that undocumented workers are the

¹⁰ Committee on the Judiciary, Illegal Aliens, Part 1, pp. 101-105.

¹¹ Committee on the Judiciary, Illegal Aliens, Part 1, p. 182

¹² Committee on the Judiciary, Illegal Aliens, Part 1, p. 25.

¹³ Committee on the Judiciary, Illegal Aliens, Part 3, pp. 893-898.

principal factor influencing the low socio-economic status of Chicanos. It was undocumented workers that forced Chicanos into the migrant stream and forced them to leave rural areas for the cities. Their continued presence poses a "clear and present danger" to Chicano living standards and is the principal factor explaining the Chicano's low rate of assimilation.¹⁴ He also sees Chicanos becoming politically isolated from their "natural allies," Blacks and labor unions, because of this issue.¹⁵ Briggs does admit, however, that:

illegal immigration is not the total cause of the widespread economic disadvantage among the Chicano population of the Southwest. But it certainly is a factor. Any effort to improve the life options to Chicanos in the Southwest must include a control of illegal immigration.¹⁶

Ray Marshall voices similar but more temperate views:

Mexican-American workers have had ambivalent attitudes about Mexican immigrants. Their kinship with and sympathies for the immigrants have been tempered by the belief that Mexican-Americans are the chief losers from the employment of Mexican aliens.¹⁷

Marshall does not provide any data to document his assessment of the Mexican-American perspective, however.

¹⁴Briggs, "Labor Market Aspects"; Vernon M. Briggs, "Illegal Aliens: The Need For A More Restrictive Border Policy," Social Science Quarterly, Vol. 56 (Dec. 1975), pp. 477-484; Vernon M. Briggs, Chicanos and Rural Poverty (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973).

¹⁵Vernon M. Briggs, "Chicano-Mexican Immigrant Interface," paper presented at Seventh National Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, November, 1977. Briggs' suggestion that the undocumented workers issue is dividing Chicanos and Blacks ignores far more fundamental conflicts that exist between the two groups. See "The Coming Black/Hispanic Coalition," Perspectives: The Civil Rights Quarterly, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1980), pp. 12-18.

¹⁶Briggs, "Chicano-Mexican Immigrant Interface," p. 7.

¹⁷Ray Marshall, "Employment Implications of the International Migration of Workers," in National Council on Employment Policy, Illegal Aliens: An Assessment of the Issues (Washington, D.C., 1976), pp. 52-65.

The arguments advanced by Briggs and Marshall seem to have strongly influenced the analysis and recommendations of Sidney Weintraub, Stanley Ross, and Richard Sinkin. Weintraub and Ross acknowledge the complexity of Chicano reactions to this issue, but they seem to disregard those reactions and rely instead on Briggs' arguments to make their final assessments. With no supporting data, they assert that "As an underclass of impoverished Americans, they [Chicanos] know that the supply of labor for many of the jobs they are able to fill is excessive in part because of the inflow of illegals." They can go on to describe how Chicano leaders view the issue:

We know how these leaders feel; they are opposed for political as well as emotional reasons to measures that would effectively restrict the flow of Mexicans, illegal or otherwise, to the United States, although they did not phrase their position that way. We do not know the views of those most likely to be affected by the flow of illegals.¹⁸

Writing independently, Weintraub argues that the potential problems associated with worker identification cards for all citizens are a small price to pay in order to reduce the lawlessness associated with undocumented worker migration and the damage it wreaks upon Chicanos and other poor Americans;

There are tradeoffs: Do we wish to keep the wedge from expanding, in the name of civil liberties, at the cost of wholesale violation of U.S. laws and to the detriment of the most disadvantaged segments of our society, the Blacks, Chicanos, other minorities, and the unemployed?¹⁹

¹⁸Weintraub and Ross, p. 20. These comments ignore the historical differences and current issues which divide Chicanos and Mexicans. See Rodolfo O. de la Garza, "Chicanos and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Future of Chicano-Mexican Relations," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Dec. 1980), pp. 571-582.

¹⁹Sidney Weintraub, "A Proposal to Phase Out U.S. Use of Foreign Temporary Workers," University of Texas, Austin, July 21, 1980.

This view is reiterated in a policy proposal submitted by Weintraub, Ross, and Sinkin, in which they claim that the program they advocate will result in "significantly aiding the most seriously disadvantaged of our citizens."²⁰

CHICANO ELITE VIEWS: SOME NEW EVIDENCE

If, as legislators and analysts indicate, Chicanos are victimized by the presence of undocumented workers, we would expect to find systematic evidence of anti-undocumented worker attitudes within the Chicano community. Although there are no reliable studies from which to generalize about Chicano community attitudes, those smaller studies that have been conducted produced results opposite to those suggested by Briggs, Weintraub, and Ross. Chicano students at the University of Texas in El Paso were found to hold very positive views of the undocumented worker and did not consider these workers a cause of Chicano unemployment.²¹ A survey in San Diego County also found Chicanos to be generally quite sympathetic to undocumented workers, and less than 8 percent believed that they had lost a job or had been denied a promotion because of competition with undocumented workers. Nevertheless, 69 percent of the respondents thought there was an "illegal alien problem" in this country.²² It is not easy

²⁰Richard N. Sinkin, S. Weintraub, and Stanley R. Ross, "A Phased Out Guest Worker Proposal," University of Texas, Austin, October 9, 1980.

²¹Roberto E. Villarreal and Richard Gutiérrez, "Political Behavior Along the Border: Chicano Attitudes Toward Undocumented Workers," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Social Science Association, April, 1978.

²²National Center for the Study of Aliens' Rights, "Alien Affinity Study," University of San Diego School of Law, San Diego, California, 1976.

to explain these contradictory findings. They may indicate that Chicanos are merely echoing attitudes and opinions voiced in the media. Whatever the explanation, these results suggest the need to determine how Chicanos get their information before accepting their responses as a measure of community attitudes.

As was shown during the Bracero program and in Congressional testimony, some Chicano leaders have at times opposed the presence of Mexican workers, whatever their legal status. Initially, César Chávez strongly opposed undocumented worker migration, but now he has modified his position and is organizing these workers.²³ Today, he distinguishes between strikebreakers and undocumented workers:

What many people fail to realize is that there are two kinds of illegal workers coming into this country: those who are hungry and those recruited specifically to break our strikes. The hungry workers are no problem, but the others matter.²⁴

Chicano organizations and analysts also acknowledge that undocumented workers have some effect on employment and wage levels, but they see the issue in terms far different than do Briggs, *et al.*²⁵

Whatever the views of the community, it is reasonable to argue that Chicano political leaders are competent to evaluate independently how undocumented workers affect Chicanos. They are better educated than the community as a whole and should be better able to evaluate the information

²³U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Civil Rights Update, November, 1978, p. 2.

²⁴As quoted in Victor P. Salandini, "Farm Worker Views on the Illegal Problem," paper presented at the plenary session of Mexican-United States Relations Conference, Tucson, Arizona, January 18, 1975, p. 4.

²⁵National Task Force on Immigration, "Position Papers"; Gilberto Cárdenas, "Policy Paper on the Legal Immigration Approach to the Undocumented Workers sponsored by the Commission of the Californias and the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 1980.

distributed through the media.²⁶ As leaders, they also are privy to information which is not generally distributed, and they have a much broader range of contacts within both Chicano and Anglo communities than would the average Chicano. Thus they are in a favorable position to assess the impact that Chicanos suffer because of the presence of undocumented workers. If it is true that undocumented workers are a major source of Chicano problems, we should find supportive evidence in the attitudes that Chicano political elites have toward the presence of undocumented workers.

Each respondent in my study was asked, "What do you think is the most important issue facing Mexican-Americans today?"²⁷ Their answers were content analyzed, and up to three responses were coded for each respondent. As Tables 1 and 2 illustrate, the undocumented worker issue had no salience for the respondents. They responded similarly to the question, "What issue is of greatest concern to your constituents?"

The low salience of this issue is further illustrated by the responses to the question, "What are your views on the issue of undocumented workers?" As Table 3 shows, only 22 percent voiced hostile views.

²⁶As of 1976, 11 percent of adult Chicano males and 5 percent of adult Chicanas had completed college (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women, August, 1978). Seventy-eight percent of the respondents interviewed in my study had college degrees, and 59 percent had begun or completed graduate or professional school.

²⁷The sample includes some non-Chicano Hispanics interviewed in Washington, D.C. Because of coding problems, it is impossible at this time to separate the non-Chicano respondents, who total 29 at most.

TABLE 1: CHICANO POLITICAL ELITE PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL ISSUES FACING CHICANOS TODAY

Issues	# of responses	% responses
Inflation	50	18.5
Education	70	26.0
Racism/discrimination	70	26.0
Apathy	81	30.0

Source: Author's interviews.

TABLE 2: CHICANO ELECTED OFFICIALS' PERCEPTIONS OF ISSUES OF PRINCIPAL CONCERN TO CONSTITUENTS

Issues	# of responses	% responses
Jobs	24	26.0
Housing	25	28.0
Education	19	21.0
Local issues	13	14.0
Other, don't know	9	10.0

Source: Author's interviews.

TABLE 3: CHICANO POLITICAL ELITE REACTIONS TO UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS

Type of Reaction	# of responses	% responses
<i>Hostile:</i> U.W. displaces Chicano workers	50	22.0
<i>Supportive:</i>		
1. Favor a temporary worker program or increased immigration quotas or economic aid to Mexico as a means to help U.W.	73	32.0
2. U.W. is an asset	102	42.0
	<u>225</u>	<u>96.0%</u>

Source: Author's interviews.

The following are typical of these responses:

Presently, I think they are hurting the job market in New Mexico and Albuquerque. We are going to have to introduce legislation to stop the massive influx. They are not just taking the levels of jobs described in the press. They are taking roofing jobs, construction jobs, and they send money back. That hurts the economy. I can't condone that.
(Legislator)

You mean illegal aliens? I don't like it. Makes it that much more difficult for ours to get jobs. They work in shipyards in our area for less money, and our kids have to leave the area without jobs. When there isn't enough manpower, O.K. But to come to my area and compete for jobs with my people makes it bad. It's difficult for me in that I feel a sort of relation toward them. In reality and probability I know what I have to do. (Legislator, Texas)

We really haven't discussed that a whole lot [my emphasis]. I can only give you my own opinion. I would simply say they are taking the jobs of some of the people here; they are creating problems with our own livelihood. The money goes to their families instead of families here in Arizona.
(Community leader)

The remaining 78 percent of respondents divided in two groups: those who are concerned primarily about resolving the issue in a way that provides some safeguards for undocumented workers (whether in the form of a temporary worker program, increased permanent immigrant quotas, or economic development assistance to Mexico), and those who see the presence of undocumented workers as an asset rather than as a problem to be solved. The following statements illustrate these two types of responses:

They have no protection whatsoever because they work for unscrupulous employers. I've never heard of an undocumented worker filing an OSHA complaint because he was hurt on the job. We have to increase the quota to 50,000 for Mexico and Canada, and each could borrow from the other. We should exclude first-preference categories. That goes against family reunification.
(Community leader, Texas)

I feel that there are many different types of work here; that, for whatever reason, the only ones you can get to do the job is illegal aliens. I look at it from the standpoint of people who are crossing. All they want is a job to keep their family together. I'd like to see it limited to the area of agriculture. Develop a system that they come in for a specified period of time to do a job and be treated humanely.

(Appointed official, New Mexico)

Undocumented workers are here because of economics. This country has survived economically because of cheap labor. It has tolerated undocumented immigration because it has served employers who have political clout. It is proven that they pay their own way. This is an issue of politics and economics. If we got all the raza and put them on a boat and called Kissinger, we could negotiate this. We bring people in all the time, and the only time we have a bad taste is when it's Mexicans. There isn't a person who has not eaten a piece of lettuce picked by an undocumented worker, or a Cadillac driven by a rancher not paid for by them. Why the Vietnamese? What about the Iranians? They have more rights than people in East Los Angeles.

(Appointed official, California)

I feel sorry for those people. They are people trying to make a living. People trying to better themselves. I've hired some myself. They've been good people. I have nothing against them. They are looking for relief, and I don't mean Welfare.

(Appointed official, New Mexico)

Further evidence of the non-threatening perception Chicano elites have of the undocumented worker is seen in Table 4. Almost half of the respondents indicated they favored completely opening the U.S.-Mexican border. That so many would support what can only be considered a radical policy option is further indication of how strongly many Chicano elites disagree with the Briggs, et al., perspective.

TABLE 4: CHICANO POLITICAL ELITE ATTITUDES TOWARD AN "OPEN BORDER"

Attitude	# of responses	% responses
Favor "open border"	65	49.0
Oppose "open border"	53	40.0
Uncertain	16	1.0
	<u>134</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Source: Author's interviews.

Overall, then, it is evident that Chicano elites do not perceive undocumented workers as a major problem; indeed, at the most general level they do not even include this among the principal issues confronting Chicanos. In order to evaluate the significance of this finding, we must attempt to explain why Chicano elites have come to hold such views.

Chicano elite reactions to the undocumented worker issue were cross-tabulated with 10 other variables, including where the respondent was raised, his/her home political environment, age, type of position held, where the interview was conducted, respondent's tenure in office, the percent of Chicanos in the respondent's constituency (for elected officials), the respondent's personal experiences with discrimination, the respondent's evaluation of the current extent of discrimination, the respondent's sex, and the respondent's attitude toward an open border.²⁸ Of these, only three -- the type position held, current evaluation of discrimination, and attitude toward an open border -- yielded a Chi-square significant at the .05 level or less. That there is so little relationship among most of these variables suggests that how Chicanos view this

²⁸ Only Chicano respondents were included in this part of the analysis.

issue is independent of their formative socialization experiences, where they were raised, and whether they were themselves victims of discrimination. Stated differently, this suggests a consensus among Chicano elite views on the undocumented worker issue, regardless of background or experiential factors.

Examination of those variables that are correlated further suggests that Chicano elites do not embrace the argument that undocumented workers are the causes of Chicano problems. As Table 5 shows, there is a difference in the response patterns of community leaders and officials. This might be explained by two factors. First, whether elected or appointed, Chicano officials indicate that they are held accountable by both Anglo and Chicano constituencies, while community leaders respond only to Chicanos. The former may therefore be articulating a position that accomodates their views with those of their two constituencies. As officials, they may also have a broader view of the issue and recognize problems not seen by community leaders. Nevertheless, fewer than one-third of the officials believe that undocumented workers displace Chicanos in the labor market, or that they should be expelled from the United States. Chicano community leaders, many of whom direct local social service agencies serving Chicanos or are the principal officers of organizations that are 95-100 percent Chicano, are even less likely to believe that undocumented workers cause problems for Chicanos.²⁹

The positive correlation between supportive attitudes toward undocumented workers and support for an open border reveals a consistency

²⁹ Only Chicano organizations are included in the study.

TABLE 5: CHICANO ELITE VIEWS OF UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS, BY TYPE OF POSITION HELD

Type of Position	Attitude toward undocumented workers		
	<i>Hostile:</i>	<i>Supportive:</i>	
	U.W. displaces Chicanos	Support temporary worker program	U.W. is an asset
Elected	17	26	26
Appointed	21	25	27
Community leader	12	22	49
	50	73	102

($X^2 = 10.85$, D.F. = 4, Sig. = .03)

Source: Author's interviews.

in the views of the respondents. If undocumented workers are seen as displacing Chicanos, respondents should oppose an open border. If undocumented workers are not perceived as competing with Chicanos, then opening the border and allowing additional Mexican workers in will not necessarily adversely affect Chicanos, and those who are unconcerned about their presence or consider them an asset would be most likely to support an open border. Table 6 illustrates this pattern.

Perhaps the most important of these relationships is that between the respondent's evaluation of the current status of discrimination against Chicanos and their reaction to undocumented workers. Table 7 reveals an *inverse* relationship between a strong perception of anti-Chicano discrimination today (as compared to ten years ago) and hostility toward undocumented workers. This strongly implies that the respondents

TABLE 6: ATTITUDES TOWARD AN OPEN BORDER, BY TYPE OF ATTITUDE TOWARD UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS

Attitude toward undocumented workers	Support an open border?		
	Yes	No	Uncertain
<i>Hostile:</i> U.W. displaces Chicano workers	3	11	4
<i>Supportive:</i>			
1. Favor a temporary worker program or increased immigration quotas or economic aid to Mexico as a means to help U.S.	16	18	5
2. U.W. is an asset	46	23	7
	65	52	16

($X^2 = 12.75$, D.F. = 4, Sig. = .01)

Source: Author's interviews.

TABLE 7: ATTITUDES TOWARD UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS, AS A FUNCTION OF PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION TODAY

Perceived discrimination today:	Attitudes toward undocumented workers		
	Hostile: U.W. displaces Chicanos	Support temp. program/quotas	U.W. is an asset
None, or significant improvement in last 10 years	11	9	7
Improvement uncertain	18	24	48
Conditions as bad or worse than ten years ago	21	40	46
	50	73	101

($X^2 = 10.06$, D.F. = 4, Sig. = .04)

Source: Author's interviews.

see no association between the presence of undocumented workers and the discrimination Chicanos face. This is particularly noteworthy since, as Table 1 shows, discrimination/racism was identified as the second most important problem facing Chicanos.

Discussion

This study does not attempt to determine the impact of undocumented workers on the Chicano community specifically or on U.S. society generally. It does, however, describe how Chicano elected and appointed officials and community leaders react to the undocumented worker issue. These are the individuals who regularly confront and have the responsibility for responding to the problems of the Chicano community. It is therefore most significant that few of them react negatively to the presence of undocumented workers, as proponents of a more restrictive immigration policy suggest they should. Chicano elites are not "opposed for political and emotional reasons" to controlling the flow of undocumented workers, as Weintraub and Ross assert. Instead, they see no need to control this flow because they do not see undocumented workers as a major source of problems for Chicanos. Those who identify undocumented workers as a problem oppose their presence; but the overwhelming majority are concerned with the abuse these workers suffer, and do not oppose their presence.

The difference in the views between those who take the former position and the majority of Chicano elites may be explained by the collective Chicano experience these elites represent. Both parents of 212 of the

respondents were born in the U.S. Southwest or Mexico, and 206 of the respondents were born in one of the five southwestern states. They are from families where the parents had little education and held low-paying jobs. Approximately 75 percent of the respondents reported that both parents had less than a high school education, with 69 percent of fathers and 61 percent of mothers having less than eight years of schooling. Fathers were primarily employed as laborers, skilled laborers, or clerks; only 6 percent held professional positions. Over 67 percent of mothers were identified as housewives. They are, in other words, from typical Chicano families.³⁰

With this kind of family background, it is not surprising that Chicano elites do not see undocumented workers as the source of their problems. They were raised in racially hostile environments, and, by their judgment, continue to be victimized by society. Their own experiences tell them that it is not the undocumented worker who denied their parents education, jobs, and equitable treatment. They do not see themselves as struggling against undocumented workers; rather, they see themselves in competition with other Americans, and it is these Americans who are the source of their problems. This perspective also explains why Chicanos are so opposed to the issuance of national identification cards -- a policy that might have negative ramifications for them. Because they perceive an already racially hostile environment, what is a minor potential problem to academic analysts portends major adverse consequences for Chicano leaders.

³⁰For statistics on Chicano families over time see U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Social Indicators.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As U.S. officials continue to grapple with the issue of undocumented worker migration, it would behoove them to be as sensitive to Chicano attitudes as they are apparently trying to be to Mexican concerns. In a democratic system, it is untenable to argue that a new immigration policy is being designed with the interests of Chicanos in mind, when Chicano political leaders systematically reject the premises of that new policy. This is not to say that such changes would or would not benefit Chicanos; it is the case, however, that the Chicano community has a leadership of its own, and that leadership does not accept the view that undocumented workers are a principal source of the problems Chicanos face. Until the Chicano community removes that leadership, policy-makers and analysts dismiss what they say only at the price of violating well-established principles of political representation.

Also, until Chicano leaders perceive a significantly improved racial environment, they are highly unlikely to support any policy that has the potential to exacerbate current problems of discrimination. This is why they continue to oppose national identity cards. Moreover, so long as Chicanos consider themselves victims of racial discrimination, they are unlikely to associate their problems with the presence of undocumented workers, and this issue will continue to have low salience for them. If they remain unconcerned about these workers, Chicanos are not likely to support new legislation aimed at reducing the participation of Mexican laborers in the U.S. workforce. Without widespread Chicano support, enforcing new immigration policies will be very difficult.

In order to convince Chicanos that undocumented workers -- and not discrimination -- are the reason for their lack of economic success, American political leaders must eliminate the practice and legacy of discrimination that Chicano leaders see as causing poverty, unemployment, and other problems. Until these barriers are recognized as having been eliminated, Chicanos have little reason to support policies aimed at controlling the flow of Mexican workers, whatever their legal status.

Chicano political leaders must also play a more active role in this debate. If, as was shown here, they do not consider undocumented workers to be a major problem, they need to make their views more widely known. It is particularly important that they discuss their views with their constituents, who all too often are exposed only to the kinds of arguments described in the first part of this paper. As was shown in the San Diego County study, Chicanos may echo such views even when the arguments are not supported by their personal experiences. Unless the Chicano community is well-informed and arrives at its own decision, government decision-makers will be able to cite "Chicano public opinion" to justify new proposals which will not necessarily serve Chicano interests, nor accurately reflect Chicano experiences.

Finally, because they are particularly concerned to ensure that the rights of undocumented workers are protected and that they be allowed continued access to this country, Chicano elites are likely to be asked to support some type of "guest worker" program since that is, in principle, one means to meet these objectives. Before committing themselves to such proposals, it is urgent that Chicano leaders con-

sider whether such programs will accomplish their goals, or whether they are merely stop-gap measures that do not address the fundamental problems affecting either the Chicano or the Mexican worker. Any policy that does not include significant efforts to restructure the Mexican economy and American investments patterns in Mexico seems doomed to failure.³¹ Without such changes, Mexicans will continue to come seeking employment, and if the problems that now plague Chicanos continue uncorrected, future undocumented workers will be blamed for problems that existed before they arrived.

³¹Fagen, "Realities of U.S.-Mexican Relations"; Fagen, "Mexican Petroleum and U.S. National Security."

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