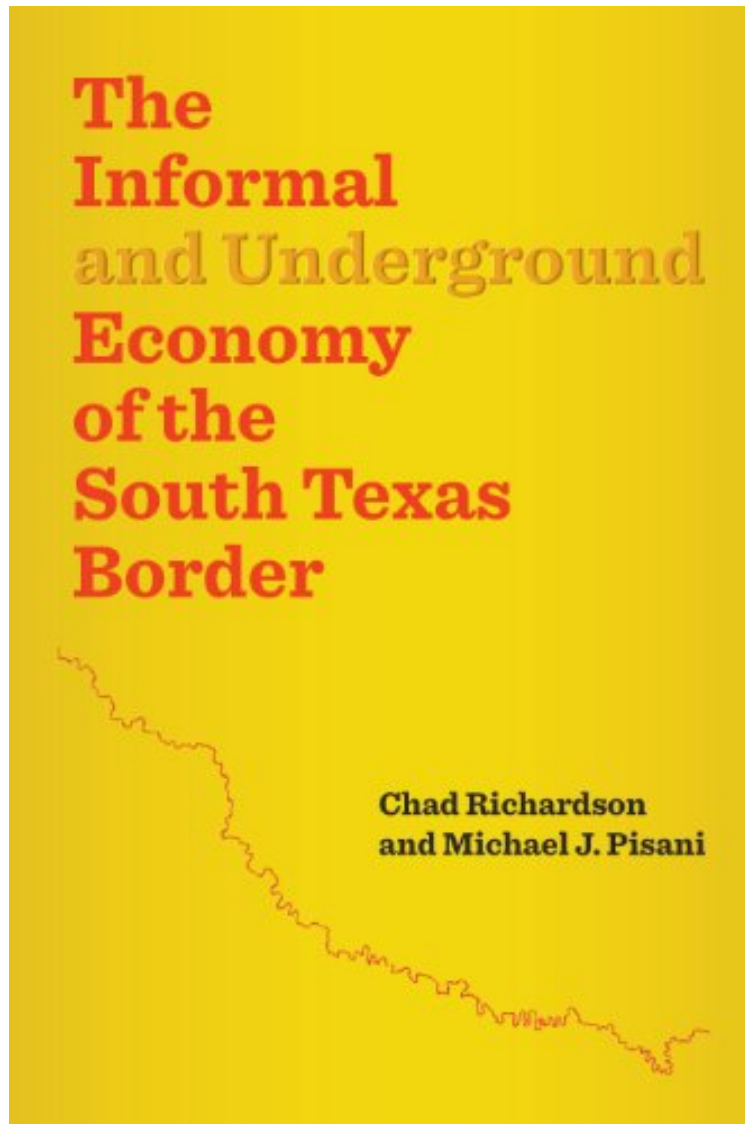


(Download) The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border (Jack and Doris Smothers Series in Texas History, Life, and C)

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Chad Richardson, Michael J. Pisani

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Chad Richardson, Michael J. Pisani : The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border (Jack and Doris Smothers Series in Texas History, Life, and C) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border (Jack and Doris Smothers Series in Texas History, Life, and C):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Immigrant labor and informalization in South Texas ndash;the future elsewhere in the US?By David StollThis is an impressive study of the informal economy of the Rio Grande Valley in southeastern Texas. Based on survey research between 2006 and 2009, Chad Richardson and Michael Pisani distinguish between the underground economy, participation in which can lead to criminal penalties, and the informal economy, which is merely unregulated and untaxed. The underground economy is more profitable because it is more risky. Underground entrepreneurs are far more likely to be U.S. citizens than undocumented immigrants because they cannot be deported.Informality means paying your labor less than the legal wage, so it sounds inherently exploitative. However, the authors have come across cases where employers do not appear to be deriving much advantage from their informal workers, but where the latter arguably benefit even from a sub-legal wage because it allows them to carve out a niche in U.S. society. So they distinguish between "dependent exploitation informality"rdquo;mdash;which generates large profits for employer--and "survival informality"rdquo;mdash;which does not.Still, there is no shortage of exploitation. Wages that citizens and legal residents pay to undocumented residents are not just below the minimum; they can be shockingly low. A sixteen-year-old live-in maid reported working on the US side for \$15 a week; even the more typical wage of \$85 per week means an annual income of \$4,420. Exploitation is also rife in agriculture. "I admit that I have them work from dawn till dusk,"rdquo; states a farmer. "It's not about treating them like slaves; it's about keeping up with the competition."rdquo;Informalization is a pervasive, expanding feature of this environment abetted by the many consumers of services provided by informal labor. Increased public acceptance of informality makes it harder for the state to enforce laws against it. This extends to widespread acquiescence in benefits fraud. More than a third of the legal population of South Texas is on public assistance. The thriving markets set up by informalization include many different levels of legality which the authors analyze in terms of the "quasi-documented."rdquo; Unlike documented (valid papers) and undocumented (no papers), the quasi-documented have papers that are fraudulent or borrowed.Richardson and Pisani argue that the informal economy serves the state, that is, the political status quo, by providing relative stability in an area of great economic need. They include some upbeat stories in which informal workers achieve upward mobility. But the severe poverty indices of South Texas give pause--are immigrant entrepreneurs achieving success at the expense of new arrivals? Are they pushing other immigrants into informal labor and keeping them there? If firms which fail to obey labor laws have a competitive advantage over firms that do obey labor laws, then informality is likely to spread. "I've found so much debt among first-generation Guatemalan immigrants in other parts of the US that I wonder if the authors are describing the future normal in other regions as well.

Much has been debated about the presence of undocumented workers along the South Texas border, but these debates often overlook the more complete dimension: the region's longstanding, undocumented economies as a whole. Borderlands commerce that evades government scrutiny can be categorized into informal economies (the unreported exchange of legal goods and services) or underground economies (criminal economic activities that, obviously, occur without government oversight). Examining long-term study, observation, and participation in the border region, with the assistance of hundreds of locally embedded informants, *The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border* presents unique insights into the causes and ramifications of these economic channels.The third volume in UTndash;Pan American's Borderlife Project, this eye-opening investigation draws on vivid ethnographic interviews, bolstered by decades of supplemental data, to reveal a culture where divided loyalties, paired with a lack of access to protection under the law and other forms of state-sponsored recourse, have given rise to social spectra that often defy stereotypes. A cornerstone of the authors' findings is that these economic activities increase when citizens perceive the state's intervention as illegitimate, whether in the form of fees, taxes, or regulation. From living conditions in the impoverished colonias to President Felipe Calderoacute;n's futile attempts to eradicate police corruption in Mexico, this book is a riveting portrait of benefit versus risk in the wake of a "no-man's-land" legacy.

"*The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border* is an engaging, important, and meticulously researched book that offers readers new insights about the intersection of locale and informal and underground economies." (American Journal of Sociology 2014-08-01)"A powerful and important contribution to the field. It will indeed be useful to readers and teachers in many social science and public policy fields outside sociology. . . . I found the text and data very real, solid, and fascinating." (Joe Feagin, Professor of Sociology, Texas AM University)"Very clear and innovative. . . . Makes a major contribution to the discussion of informal labor in the United States and covers new ground that has been studied a lot in developing countries but has been largely ignored as a component of the U.S. labor force." (Joan Anderson, Professor Emerita of Economics, University of San Diego) "A powerful and important contribution to the field. It will indeed be useful to readers and teachers in many social science and public policy fields outside sociology. . . . I found the text and data very real, solid, and fascinating." (Joe Feagin, Professor of Sociology, Texas AM University)"Very clear and innovative. . . . Makes a major contribution to the discussion of informal labor in the United States and covers new ground that has been studied a lot in developing countries but has

been largely ignored as a component of the U.S. labor force." (Joan Anderson, Professor Emerita of Economics, University of San Diego)About the AuthorChad Richardson is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Texas Pan American. His previous books are *Batos, Bolillos, Pochos, Pelados: Class Culture on the South Texas Border* and *On the Edge of the Law: Culture, Labor Deviance on the South Texas Border*. Michael J. Pisani is Professor of International Business at Central Michigan University and is also affiliated with the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University. His research emphasizes cross-border business within Central America and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.