Embracing Paradox: Three Problems the NLRB Must Confront to Resist Further Erosion of Labor Rights in the Expanding Immigrant Workplace

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This Article discusses the Supreme Court’s 2002 Hoffman Plastic Compounds opinion, normally considered in terms of its social justice ramifications, from the different perspective of NLRB attorneys tasked with pursuing enforcement of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) under the conceptually (and practically) odd rubric that some NLRA-covered employees, unauthorized workers, have no remedy under the NLRA. The Article focuses on three problems evincing paradox. First, NLRB attorneys prosecuting cases involving these workers will probably gain knowledge of unlawful background immigration conduct. To what extent must the attorneys disclose it, and to whom? Second, NLRB attorneys are extraordinarily reliant on the broad crediting of employee witnesses to establish unlawful employer conduct. How can NLRB attorneys win credibility-based cases heard before judges who may be predisposed to disbelieve witnesses based on the witnesses’ unauthorized status? Third, bargaining units under the NLRA, which are certified when a union gains the support of a majority of employees in a work setting, can be severely impacted by the absence of a discharge remedy after Hoffman. How can the structural integrity of the NLRA be maintained if employers may simply discharge union-represented, unauthorized workers, without real remedial consequence, until the union’s majority support, and with it the employer’s obligation to bargain, is destroyed? Assessing the NLRB’s peculiar, post-Hoffman investigative policy of assiduously avoiding immigration issues, the Article contrarily recommends active engagement with the problems identified, and chides the agency’s failure to embrace new paradox in the expanding immigrant workplace as a serious abdication of its mission.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The much-discussed Hoffman Plastic Compounds opinion, 1 decided by the Supreme Court in 2002, was as indefensible for most labor lawyers as it was predictable for many immigration lawyers. 2 The opinion held

that allowing the [National Labor Relations] Board to award backpay to illegal aliens would unduly trench upon explicit statutory prohibitions critical to federal immigration policy, as expressed in the [Immigration Reform and Control Act]. It would encourage the successful evasion of apprehension by immigration authorities, condone prior violations of the immigration laws, and encourage future violations.

As Catherine Fisk and Michael Wishnie observed, before Hoffman many labor lawyers instinctively presumed that a worker's immigration status was immaterial to labor law coverage. Labor law attorneys' reflexive presumption of broad labor law coverage derives from the tradition of "labor law's embrace of collective action and private rights enforcement to achieve public deterrence [of labor law violations]." In other words, for a "traditional" labor lawyer the status of an individual discriminatee was irrelevant to the question of coverage, provided the employee did not fall into a classification expressly excluded from coverage by the National Labor Relations Act. To view the matter differently would ignore the public function of labor law. A central tradition of American labor lawyers, and of the NLRA world within which they practice, is that of "solidarity," or assertion of collective rights in furtherance of individual rights. That notion emphasizes individual rights as they impact the collective centrality of labor law.

The Supreme Court in Hoffman did not look through such a subtle prism. For a majority of the Court, unauthorized workers, though covered as "employees" under the NLRA, were not entitled to backpay if not lawfully present in the United States. The Court thought this true because...
"awarding backpay to illegal aliens runs counter to policies underlying the IRCA, policies the Board has no authority to enforce or administer. Therefore . . . the award lies beyond the bounds of the Board's remedial discretion."13 The Court essentially concluded that the policies of the IRCA—such as the Court found them to be14—were more important than the policies underlying the NLRA, notwithstanding that the IRCA's legislative history showed that Congress had no intention of impacting NLRA remedies.15

The purpose of this article, however, is not to engage in another extended critique of *Hoffman*.16 Rather, the article addresses percolating

13. *Id.* at 149.

14. Although the Court spoke earnestly respecting the seriousness of the congressional intent to eliminate unauthorized immigration, as manifested by the IRCA, *see id.* at 147-49, a pragmatic assessment of that claim of seriousness has been offered by Judge Posner:

If all Americans were required to carry biometric identification, if any clandestine entry into the United States were punished as a serious crime, and if the employment of an illegal alien were made a federal felony with a mandatory minimum punishment of 10 years in prison, the problem of illegal immigration would be solved more or less overnight, and the millions of illegal immigrants would be on their way back to Mexico and Central America (and in lesser numbers to China and other poor countries that supply us with many illegal immigrants). This exodus—this de facto deportation of the illegal immigrant population—would disrupt the economies both of the United States and of Mexico.


16. That type of criticism is abundant, and rightly so, as the Court appeared to be drawing on a rarified notion of pristine citizenship far in excess of anything the IRCA actually expressed. So inconsistent with reality was the Court's view of the IRCA that it seemed to stray into the realm of "folklore," as Thurman Arnold once employed the term in his still provocative work, *The Folklore of Capitalism*, (Beard Books 2000) (1937). Arnold observed that the punditry of the legal and economic establishment was prone to overlooking or ignoring obvious changes in social reality, preferring to cling to a system of outmoded beliefs that he termed, "folklore." In a seminal passage Arnold stated:

It may be asserted as a principle of human organization that when new types of social organization are required, respectable, well-thought-of, and conservative people are unable to take part in them. Their moral and economic prejudices, their desire for approval of other members of the group, compel them to oppose any form of organization which does not fit into the picture of society as they have known it in the past. This principle is on the one hand the balance wheel of social organization and on the other hand its greatest element of rigidity.

*Id.* at 3. In *Hoffman*, a majority of the Court abandoned the text and legislative history of the IRCA for an imagined and activist conjuring-up of statutory conflict with the NLRA and, in doing so, "oppose[d] any form of organization which does not fit into the picture of society as they have known it in the past." *Id.*

The immigration reality as it presently exists in American society is a massive de facto organization of employers, unauthorized workers, and nod-and-wink consumers. The *Hoffman* folklore prefers to deny this reality and to blithely assert that unauthorized immigrant workers are simply "illegal," *see, e.g.*, the majority's repetitive use of the term "illegal workers," 535 U.S. at 142 n.2, ignoring the high likelihood of the permanent presence of unauthorized immigration in the national economy and the implications of the presence for industrial stability, the raison d'etre of the NLRA. *See Knowledge @ Wharton, Law and Public Policy, The Immigration Debate: Its Impact on Workers, Wages and Employers, http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=1482&CFID=61005198&CFTOKEN=86413370&jsess (last visited July 24, 2008) (unauthorized workers comprise twenty-four per cent of all workers in farming, seventeen per cent in cleaning, fourteen per cent in construction, twelve per cent in food preparation, thirty-six per cent of all insulation workers, twenty-nine per cent of all roofers and drywall installers, and twenty-seven per cent of all butchers and other food-processing workers). The
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practical issues left in the wake of Hoffman's theoretical conundrums. While litigation involving unauthorized workers predated Hoffman, the case removed any lingering doubts that unauthorized workers were statutory employees, even while it divested them of a remedy. Indeed, the Supreme Court's unequivocal finding that unauthorized workers are NLRA employees guaranteed a continuing, complicated interplay between immigration and labor law.

The organization responsible for day-to-day administration of labor law is the National Labor Relations Board, which has for roughly the past seven years been left the untidy job of interpreting this seemingly contradictory state of affairs. The global tension between the labor law coverage of unauthorized workers and the absence of a remedy for those workers when employers discriminate against them under labor law manifests itself in a series of paradoxes at the level of statutory enforcement. This article delineates and explores the contours of those paradoxes for NLRB prosecutors.

presence of these unauthorized workers could not possibly have been accomplished without the pervasive complicity of entire sectors of the facially legitimate economy. Much has been written about this chimera, and little need be added here to the broader discussion about Hoffman that is not impeccably captured by analogy in Professor Arnold's cited passage, and specifically critiqued in Justice Breyer's brilliant Hoffman dissent, 535 U.S. at 153, and in the work of able commentators. See, e.g., Christopher David Ruiz Cameron, Borderline Decisions: Hoffman Plastic Compounds, the New Bracero Program, and the Supreme Court's Role in Making Federal Labor Policy, 51 UCLA L. Rev. 1 (2003); Robert I. Correales, Did Hoffman Plastic Compounds, Inc. Produce Disposable Workers?, 14 BERKELEY LA RAZA L.J. 103 (2003); Katherine E. Seitz, Enter at Your Own Risk: The Impact of Hoffman Plastic Compounds v. National Labor Relations Board on the Undocumented Worker, 82 N.C. L. Rev. 366 (2003). 17. "The principle that legal rights must have remedies is fundamental to democratic government." Donald H. Ziegler, Rights Require Remedies: A New Approach to the Enforcement of Rights in the Federal Courts, 38 HASTINGS L.J. 665, 665 (1987). This is a maxim sufficiently ancient to be comfortably rendered in Latin: ubi jus ibi remedium. See Douglas Laycock, How Remedies Became a Field: A History, 27 Rev. Litig. 161, 168 (2008). The Hoffman Court found that a cease and desist order rendered against an employer, coupled with the posting of a conspicuous "Notice to Employees" containing promises to comply with the law, supported by the threat of court sanction for non-compliance, was an adequate remedy for the NLRA violations found by the NLRB, which the Court did not disturb. Hoffman, 535 U.S. at 152. As a practical matter, that order ran to the union's future attempts to organize employees at Hoffman, and to future individual victims of discrimination. Only scholastic reasoning could conclude that this remedied the violation of the Section 7 rights of the unauthorized worker who was the actual victim of the unlawful discharge.


19. The prosecutorial arm of the NLRB is the Office of the General Counsel. The adjudicative branch of the NLRB is referred to as "the Board." In this article the term "NLRB attorneys" refers to regional office attorneys who investigate and prosecute cases under the direction of the General Counsel.
the foot soldiers engaged in the vindication of the collective labor law rights and remedies now remaining to unauthorized workers.21

There are three such paradoxes. First, NLRB attorneys must advance the claims of unauthorized workers under one statutory regime, the NLRA, who may simultaneously, but secretly, be violating another statutory regime, the IRCA. As will be developed, violations of the IRCA are arguably subject to disclosure by NLRB attorneys under professional responsibility rules. However, the disclosure of the violations could jeopardize NLRB prosecutions. Second, NLRB attorneys must prosecute cases in which witness credibility is essential, but which revolve around witnesses who very likely have made serious misrepresentations in connection with their immigration status. Third, because under Hoffman unauthorized workers may be summarily discharged by employers, with only limited remedial consequence, any attempt by the NLRB to protect these workers’ collective bargaining rights may be extremely short-lived. Employers can apparently simply fire unauthorized workers until any collective bargaining rights established under law on their behalf have been extinguished.

The NLRB’s first reaction to Hoffman was somewhat counterintuitive; the agency took the position that it would not investigate immigration particulars, even those touching on the paradoxes raised in this article, and claimed that, in many respects, Hoffman had not changed anything.22 The rationale behind the NLRB’s deliberate avoidance of the potentially complicated details surrounding unlawful immigration is in some respects understandable. The NLRB has little expertise in immigration law and would have to devote resources to acquire it.

20. If any rights under the NLRA can be conceived as “individual”—given the paucity of backpay awards and the dubious benefit of employee reinstatement to a hostile employer—no such rights remain to particular unauthorized workers who are the individual victims of discrimination for engaging in NLRA protected conduct. See supra note 17 and accompanying text.

21. Labor law’s remedial scheme is incremental. On the one hand, it is unlikely that any “bad actor” could be deterred from engaging in unlawful conduct—particularly discharges—by the weak, typically isolated remedies that are the hallmark of the NLRA. See Paul C. Weiler, Promises to Keep: Securing Workers’ Rights to Self-Organization under the NLRA, 96 HARV. L. REV. 1769, 1788-89 (1983) (arguing that “the traditional remedies for discriminatory discharge—backpay and reinstatement—simply are not effective deterrents to employers who are tempted to trample on their employees’ rights”). Repeated unlawful conduct, on the other hand, may lead to court-enforced administrative orders, the violation of which could lead to a court-imposed contempt sanction. The adequacy of the scheme is a matter of legitimate and perpetual debate. See, e.g., Michael Weiner, Comment, Can the NLRB Deter Unfair Labor Practices? Reassessing the Punitive-Remedial Distinction in Labor Law Enforcement, 52 UCLA L. Rev. 1579 (2005). One may accordingly question what of value was actually lost in Hoffman. The fact remains that NLRA litigation involving unauthorized workers continues, and that unions are increasing efforts to organize unauthorized workers. See, e.g., James Parks, Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, AFL-CIO, available at http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisiswhatwefight/publications/magazine/0903_iwfr.cfm (last visited August 17, 2008) (discussing organized labor’s commitment to organize unauthorized immigrants and upcoming “freedom ride” to publicize the commitment).

22. See infra at Part II.
Additionally, there is the real danger that NLRA-related immigration investigations might deter unauthorized workers from reporting and pursuing violations of the NLRA. As Keith Cunningham-Parmeter has argued, in the context of employment litigation, status-based discovery can, and often does, cause unauthorized workers to opt out or abandon employment claims. But, unlike the situation in civil employment litigation where the risk of claim abandonment and the problem of under-deterrence it represents is essentially “private,” NLRA policy is explicitly “collective,” and operates under the premise that workers’ freedom of association is essential to improving workplace conditions for all workers. The NLRB’s mandate to protect the collective bargaining rights of all workers therefore requires a balancing of the risk of claim opt-out, or abandonment, by individual workers, against the collective risk of statutory under-enforcement flowing from a failure to confront the immigration dimensions of NLRA cases.

Without development of immigration-conscious investigative procedures, NLRB regional directors may be more inclined to dismiss cases whenever lurking, but inchoate, immigration issues take them beyond their prosecutorial comfort zone. To contend with this ill-defined exoticism, the NLRB, contrary to its present practice, should explicitly analyze and evaluate immigration issues and consciously develop strategies reflecting an appropriate balance of risks, rather than simply fleeing from the risks of overinvestment in immigration expertise and the potential for claim opt-out or abandonment. The agency need not become expert in immigration law; it need only identify obvious issues. While the NLRB may believe that avoidance of immigration particulars is, in effect, striking a balance of risks, this article contends that studious detachment from the operative facts of cases—facts reflecting the industrial realities that are presumably the stock in trade of the NLRB—is unwarranted and pernicious. The NLRB’s failure to devise administrative procedures and a litigation strategy that embraces paradoxes aggravated by Hoffman creates a serious risk of incremental, de facto deregulation of unauthorized workers—a large and rapidly

24. Id.
25. See 29 U.S.C. § 157 (defining federal labor policy in terms of the collective bargaining rights and freedom of association of all workers). Admittedly, this view concedes a cramped view of antidiscrimination law, such as Title VII, that, in its original design at least, sought to protect broad classes of workers. See Karl Klare, Traditional Labor Law Scholarship and the Crisis of Collective Bargaining Law: A Reply to Professor Finkin, 44 Mo. L. Rev. 731, 761-62 (1985). The observation is made in the context of what antidiscrimination law has become.
26. Regional directors have extremely broad prosecutorial discretion not to pursue cases, even those that are meritorious. See NLRB CASEHANDLING MANUAL (Part One) §10122.2(c), 10122.14(d) & (e). In fiscal year 2003, for example, NLRB regional directors “merit dismissed” allegations in 104 cases. NLRB INSPECTION REPORT No. OIG-INS-30-04-01, REVIEW OF MERIT DISMISAL PROCEDURES (2003), available at http://www.nlrb.gov/nlrb/about/ig/reports/insp_ins-30-04-01.html.
27. See infra at Part II.
growing segment of the labor market—a prospect utterly inimical to the industrial peace that is the cornerstone of the NLRA.

Part II of this article discusses the NLRB's initial attempts to grapple with various post-\textit{Hoffman} issues. Part III assesses professional responsibility issues arising when NLRB attorneys seek to vindicate the rights of workers who may be engaged in continuing violations of federal immigration law. Part IV considers inherent credibility problems for NLRB attorneys relying on the testimony of unauthorized workers to establish facts sufficient to make out violations of the NLRA. Lastly, Part V evaluates whether the stability of NLRA rights conferred on unions representing unauthorized workers justifies expenditure of NLRB resources to gain those rights.

II. THE GENERAL COUNSEL'S 2002 HOFFMAN MEMORANDUM

The NLRB's prosecuting division, composed primarily of labor lawyers, predictably reacted to \textit{Hoffman} in the manner described by Fisk and Wishnie. While acknowledging, as it was bound to, that \textit{Hoffman} was the state of the law, it subtly, perhaps unconsciously, resisted. A 2002 memorandum from the NLRB's General Counsel ("the Hoffman Memorandum") instructed NLRB regional offices not to alter their investigative procedures in light of \textit{Hoffman}.

The Hoffman Memorandum acknowledged that "the Court clearly held that backpay is unavailable to remedy the discharge of individuals for the period of time they were legally unavailable to work in this country."
Accordingly, the Memorandum instructed that “[r]egions should not seek a backpay remedy once evidence establishes that a discriminatee was not authorized to work during the backpay period.”35 However, striking a somewhat strident tone, the Memorandum also asserted that “[r]egions have no obligation to investigate an employee’s immigration status unless a respondent affirmatively establishes the existence of a substantial immigration issue . . . [and] . . . should begin their analysis with the presumption that employees and employers alike have conformed to the law . . . .”36 The Memorandum took the position that:

[t]he Hoffman decision does not shift the burden onto the Board to conduct an immigration investigation in the first instance. In fact, this issue arose in Hoffman not pursuant to an investigation, but because the discriminatee admitted on the witness stand during a compliance hearing that he was undocumented throughout the backpay period.37

These instructions amount to advice to NLRB investigators and trial attorneys to plunge into cases, often obviously rich in immigration subtext, with blinders on.38 According to the Hoffman Memorandum, unless an employer should happen to come forward with evidence that a discriminatee is unauthorized, thereby opening itself to the potential for IRCA liability, the immigration status of a discriminatee will simply not be considered during the course of pre-trial investigation, in settlement negotiations, or during the merits phase of a trial.40 Any immigration issues that may exist are to be deferred until the compliance phase of a proceeding.41 Of course, if a

35. Id.
36. Id. at 4, § E (emphasis added).
37. Id. (emphasis added).
38. Shahid Haque, Comment, Beyond Hoffman Plastic: Reforming National Labor Relations Policy to Conform to the Immigration Reform and Control Act, 79 Chi.-Kent L. Rev. 1357, 1376-78 (2004) (arguing that by refusing to inquire into the status of undocumented workers the NLRB has created several problems which Congress should correct by compelling the agency to actively investigate the immigration status of claimants “where it may be reasonably brought forward in the course of conduct”).
39. See generally Collins Food Int’l v. INS, 948 F.2d 549 (9th Cir. 1991) (observing that courts are authorized to find employer had constructive knowledge of worker’s unauthorized status). An employer is accordingly at risk attempting to prove to immigration authorities that it had no knowledge of a worker’s immigration status before the onset of NLRB litigation. The risk may be sufficient to discourage employers from raising immigration issues in NLRB proceedings, particularly during the investigative stages of a case before liabilities or remedies are at stake.
40. Hoffman Memorandum, supra note 32, at 4, § E. One problem with proceeding in this fashion is that it may create settlement problems. The NLRB informally settles a high percentage of its “merit” cases. Employer claims of discriminatee unauthorized status raised before trial in the context of settlement negotiations would have to be resolved in order to settle the case. The Hoffman Memorandum instructs regions that cases of that sort should be submitted to the Division of Advice (“Advice”) in Washington, D.C. Id. It is unclear what the practice is thereafter because the details of settlement are usually confidential.
41. Id. at 1, § B.2 (citing Intersweet, Inc., 321 N.L.R.B. 1, 1, n.2 (1996), enforced 125 F.3d 1064 (7th Cir. 1997) (agreeing with NLRB’s view that employer’s contention that discriminatees not entitled to backpay or reinstatement because they were unauthorized workers was appropriately left to the compliance stage of the proceeding)). NLRB proceedings are divided into a merits and a liability, or “compliance,” stage. The compliance stage does not proceed until a charged party has decided not to appeal
discriminatee is unauthorized, no backpay or reinstatement will be available as a remedy.\footnote{42} Imagine a plaintiff in any other forum going through the time and expense of trial preparation and formal litigation actively avoiding issues that could result in the nullification of any substantial remedy during the damages phase of the proceeding.

Immigration issues could nevertheless emerge in any number of ways during pre-trial investigation, in settlement negotiations,\footnote{43} or during trial, despite the considerable energy expended by the NLRB trying to avoid them. At trial, for example, employer counsel could simply ask a discriminatee, on cross-examination, about the discriminatee’s immigration status, notwithstanding Orrin Baird’s sensible speculation that an employer facing immigration law liability would be unlikely to do so.\footnote{44} As any labor relations specialist would concede, labor relations parties do not always act in ways that are entirely sensible, and the unlikely can occur.\footnote{45} Even if an NLRB trial attorney objects at trial to a question touching on immigration status on the grounds that \textit{Hoffman} has rendered the question irrelevant, as implicitly instructed in the Hoffman Memorandum,\footnote{46} employer counsel will probably be able to make an administrative law judge\footnote{47} aware of the issue an adverse NLRB merit determination to a federal circuit court, or until the charged party loses on appeal and is ordered by the court to comply with the NLRB’s order. Accordingly, a strongly held position on immigration could be resolved in a circuit court.

\begin{itemize}
  \item 42. \textit{Hoffman}, 535 U.S. at 151.
  \item 43. \textit{See supra} note 40.
  \item 44. Orrin Baird, \textit{Undocumented Workers and the NLRA: Hoffman Plastic Compounds and Beyond}, 19 LAB. LAW 153, 167 (2003). How realistic a concern is immigration law liability for employers? In Concrete Form Walls, 346 N.L.R.B. 831 (2006), the employer repeatedly argued that it was not in violation of the NLRB because the discriminatees were “undocumented.” The NLRB offered evidence that the employer maintained a separate payroll of “Hispanic” employees whose social security numbers it had not attempted to verify, in obvious violation of federal immigration law. \textit{Id.}, slip op. at 19. The employer did not object to the introduction of this evidence, which it presumably would have done if it feared immigration liability. The employer in \textit{Intersweet}, \textit{see supra} note 41, repeatedly raised the argument that the discriminatees in that case were unauthorized workers, which it presumably would not have done if it feared liability. Although immigration enforcement actions against employers have been increasing, \textit{see} U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT, FY07 ACCOMPLISHMENTS, STRENGTHENING WORKSITE ENFORCEMENT, available at http://www.ice.gov/doclib/pi/news/factsheets/fy07accomplshmntsweb.pdf (last visited July 26, 2008), employers continue to raise affirmatively the undocumented status of their workers as a defense to NLRB charges. Flau Appetizing Corp., 2009 WL 437661 (N.L.R.B. Div. of Judges); Case Farms of North Carolina, 353 N.L.R.B. No. 26, slip op. at 23 (2008). The ongoing inference to be drawn from these cases is that for some employers the benefits of union avoidance may exceed the costs of immigration liability.
  \item 45. \textit{See generally} Duncan Kennedy, \textit{The Stakes of Law, or Hale and Foucault!}, 15 LEGAL STUD. F. 327, 331 (1991) (observing that parties in labor relationships are influenced in decision-making by a number of factors including “crazy intense commitment that makes some people willing to do things that the other party regards as irrational”) available at http://www.duncankennedy.net/documents/The%20Stakes%20of%20Law%20or%20Hale%20and%20Foucault%20-%20Leg%20Stud.pdf (last visited July 30, 2008).
  \item 46. Hoffman Memorandum, \textit{supra} note 32, at 5, § E.
  \item 47. NLRB unfair labor practice cases are tried without jury to an administrative law judge in the manner of a formal adjudication governed by § 554 of the Administrative Procedure Act. \textit{See} 29 U.S.C. § 160(b)-(c).
\end{itemize}
simply by making an offer of proof.\textsuperscript{48} Alternatively, a witness or discriminatee may divulge, without solicitation, his or her unauthorized status and related unlawful conduct to an NLRB attorney before trial. The Hoffman Memorandum does not appear to contemplate such an eventuality.\textsuperscript{49} Such a revelation, to either an NLRB attorney or to employer counsel\textsuperscript{50} during trial or pre-trial investigation, could have a significant impact on the NLRB attorney’s case, even before it arrives at the compliance phase.

Adding to the potential for the NLRB’s overall litigation risk is the underlying nature of NLRB pre-trial procedures. In short, there is no discovery process in NLRB litigation.\textsuperscript{51} Consequently, even apart from the additional limitations imposed by the Hoffman Memorandum, under typical procedures an NLRB attorney would have no way of knowing about immigration irregularities, or an employer’s possible awareness of those irregularities.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} See Division of Judges, NLRB, Bench Book, 13, § 113. In the underlying proceeding in Hoffman itself, the immigration evidence that became the focus of subsequent litigation was elicited in an atypical offer of proof in which the employer’s counsel was permitted to cross-examine the discriminatee in the compliance phase of the proceeding. Hoffman Plastic Compounds, Inc., 326 N.L.R.B. 1060, 1062 n.9 (1998). The administrative law judge sustained the NLRB attorney’s objections to the line of immigration questioning, which resulted in a series of admissions by the discriminatee, but nevertheless made findings based on the admissions. Remarkably, no exception appears to have been taken by the NLRB attorney to this strange trial sequence. Id.
\item \textsuperscript{49} The role of an investigating NLRB agent is explained in the NLRB’s Unfair Labor Practice Case Handling Manual § 10050: As impartial investigators, Board agents should identify themselves as agents of the Board to all witnesses and parties, should explain the purpose of the investigation and should avoid conveying a prosecutorial image. Although Board agents should not provide advice to the parties and must remain neutral throughout the investigation, Board agents should freely identify and discuss the theories underlying the charge with both parties. This is particularly true with respect to individual charging parties who do not typically have any expertise in Agency law and procedures. Throughout the investigation, Board agents should assertively seek out all material evidence in the spirit of providing the Regional Director with a complete picture of the events so as to permit an informed decision on the case.
\item \textsuperscript{50} See Johnnie’s Poultry Co., 146 N.L.R.B. 770, 775 (1964), enforcement denied on other grounds, 344 F.2d 617 (8th Cir. 1965) (establishing that an employer’s attorney may contact and question an employee in advance of trial if the attorney takes detailed precautionary measures to ensure that the employee is not coerced by the questioning). A pre-trial interview of a witness by an employer’s counsel could probably elicit facts concerning immigration status while following established precautionary measures.
\item \textsuperscript{51} See Starr v. Comm’r of Int’l Revenue, 226 F.2d 721, 722 (7th Cir. 1955), cert. denied, 350 U.S. 993 (1956) (holding that parties to judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings are not entitled to discovery as a matter of constitutional right); see also Frilette v. Kimberlin, 508 F.2d 205, 208 (3d Cir. 1974) (en banc), cert. denied 421 U.S. 980 (1975) (holding that Administrative Procedure Act does not confer a right to discovery in federal administrative proceedings); NLRB v. Interboro Contractors, Inc., 432 F.2d 854, 857-58 (2d Cir. 1970), cert. denied 402 U.S. 915 (1971); NLRB v. Globe Wireless, Ltd., 193 F.2d 748, 751 (9th Cir. 1951) (affirming that NLRA does not specifically authorize or require the NLRB to adopt discovery procedures).
\end{itemize}
larities, unless a witness or discriminatee revealed them. While trial by ambush is part and parcel of NLRB litigation in the absence of discovery processes, unexpected immigration developments can add considerably to litigation uncertainties. The Hoffman Memorandum exacerbates an inherently hostile litigation environment by pretending that all can be business as usual until the compliance phase. This article suggests that this posture is unwise and should be modified.\footnote{52}

III.\footnote{52} ETHICAL PARADOX

A. Scope of the Problem

Professional responsibility issues comprise the first of the three paradoxical problems this article will address. The issues arise in NLRB cases because when NLRB attorneys seek to vindicate the rights of workers engaged in continuing violations of federal immigration law, a vindication unambiguously authorized by Hoffman, it is arguable that the existence of known or easily ascertainable immigration violations must be disclosed by NLRB attorneys under norms of professional responsibility. Disclosure of such violations, however, may weaken an NLRB case in two ways. It may provide employers with defenses to conduct otherwise unlawful under the NLRA. It may also provide employers with an argument that unauthorized workers are not credible witnesses, a daunting prospect where important witnesses are unauthorized. The Hoffman Memorandum makes no mention of these issues.

On a broader level, professional responsibility issues may come into play because the public at large may view actions by government agencies, lawyers, or courts in furtherance of the rights of unauthorized workers as complicity in breaking the law. Hoffman’s validation of the NLRB’s prosecution on behalf of unauthorized workers means that this kind of litigation will continue, aggravating those in the body politic who challenge the idea that unauthorized workers have rights.\footnote{53} For those observers, the legitimacy of the NLRB as the enforcer of the labor rights of illegal workers

\footnote{52. The Hoffman Memorandum takes the position that novel immigration issues be submitted to the Division of Advice. See Hoffman Memorandum, \textit{supra} note 32, at 5, § E. While this approach may seem soothing in connection with problems encountered at the beginning phases of a case, it would not appear helpful at trial, after the NLRB has already invested significant resources. Furthermore, unless Division of Advice analyses of submitted cases are explained carefully following the Division’s decision, regional offices may not gain expertise. Regional office personnel may view the decision of submitted immigration issues as ad hoc determinations lacking transparent unifying principles.}

appears indefensible,\textsuperscript{54} and certainly not in the public interest.\textsuperscript{55} The ethics of NLRB attorneys may be called into question by such observers or by parties appearing before the agency who seek tactical advantage under formal rules and canons of professional responsibility applicable to attorneys. Broadly speaking, it seems fair to say that blind involvement by NLRB attorneys in the enforcement of the rights of unauthorized workers could be ethically counterintuitive.\textsuperscript{56}

The state professional responsibility rules applicable to private sector attorneys do not completely clarify whether an attorney acts within norms of state professional responsibility when representing unauthorized workers in employment litigation.\textsuperscript{57} Christine Cimini has argued that in most cases such representation would pass ethical muster under the Model Rules.\textsuperscript{58} Her analysis, however, demonstrates that the matter is not free from doubt, particularly due to the complexity of the myriad disclosure obligations existing under professional responsibility rules.\textsuperscript{59} Thus, in private practice settings an attorney must assess the omnipresent tension between professional responsibility rules requiring disclosure of fraud and criminality—to tribunals or others—and those requiring protection of a client’s confidential information.\textsuperscript{60}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Michael R. Brown, Hoffman Plastic Compounds v. NLRB: The First Step?, 19 LAB. LAW. 169, 184 (2003) (questioning how the NLRB could “logically allow an illegal alien to vote or to be awarded damages if demoted unlawfully, if the alien is not authorized to work lawfully in the first instance”).
\item \textsuperscript{55} See, e.g., Heather MacDonald, Seeing Today’s Immigrants Straight: Advocates of “comprehensive immigration reform” let ideology blind them to the dispiriting facts on the ground, CITY J. (Summer 2006), available at http://www.city-journal.org/printable.php?id=2039 (last visited July 20, 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{56} Although not cast in terms of professional responsibility, this was implicitly the argument made by a charged employer in A.P.R.A. Fuel Oil Buyers Group, Inc., 312 N.L.R.B. 471, 474 n.2 (1993) (detailing employer’s argument that the NLRB’s response to a Freedom of Information Act request revealed that two of the NLRB’s witnesses were using false and fraudulent names and that the NLRB’s concealment of the information may have “affected the credibility of witnesses and tainted the hearing proceedings”). The controversy apparently arose at trial but might have taken shape at any stage of a proceeding. One approach to managing such risks is to actively ignore these kinds of facts, but this article argues that is the wrong approach.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Cimini, supra note 57, at 358-60.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Expressed in terms of the Model Rules, the conflict is between the client confidentiality requirements of Rule 1.6 and other rules containing disclosure requirements, most notably Rule 3.3’s requirement that attorneys act with candor when dealing with a tribunal.
Two analytical difficulties complicate the identification of professional responsibility obligations of attorneys employed by the federal government. First, it is frequently unclear whether the legal ethics of federal attorneys are controlled by the rules of the states to which they have been admitted, by some other body of rules, such as the rules of courts or administrative agencies, or even by a more generalized duty to the "public interest." Second, even if the professional responsibility duties of federal attorneys are located solely within the rules and canons of their states of bar admission, it is arguable that those rules are preempted by the policies being pursued by the attorneys' federal employers. Before exploring these difficulties, this Article will consider the factual circumstances that could bring professional responsibility questions into play.

B. Investigative and Trial Scenarios Tending to Reveal the Problem

Assuming that the NLRB, faithful to the Hoffman Memorandum, does not actively investigate the immigration status of a discriminatee or witness, an NLRB investigator or trial attorney may nevertheless come to know of it, or of some other unlawful immigration conduct because of a "blurting" incident during pre-trial investigation, because unexpected testimony surfaces at trial, or through some other means. If an NLRB attorney should learn during pre-trial investigation that a discriminatee or witness is an unauthorized worker, certain professional responsibility issues centering on disclosure arguably come into play. Similarly, an NLRB attorney might...
learn that a discriminatee, in addition to being an unauthorized worker, has made a false representation of identity to the NLRB during the pre-trial investigation, perhaps out of fear that the revelation of the worker’s actual identity could lead to deportation or criminal charges. An NLRB attorney might also learn that a discriminatee or witness made a false claim of citizenship to obtain employment or that fraudulent documents were tendered to the employer to obtain employment.

None of these scenarios would necessarily result in the NLRB’s refusal to find a violation of the NLRA. For example, if an employer was unaware of the facts surrounding a discriminatee’s misrepresentation or criminal conduct at the time it violated the NLRA, then the facts may qualify as after-acquired evidence; evidence upon which the employer could not factually have relied in taking unlawful action against a discriminatee, but which is sufficiently serious to deprive the employee of a remedy, despite the finding of a statutory violation. Practically speaking, the intertwining of unlawful immigration conduct with the operative facts of NLRA cases was assured once the Supreme Court agreed that unauthorized workers were covered by the NLRA. But leaving the issue of statutory coverage aside, the common scenarios in these cases are likely to either reveal or strongly suggest the existence of unlawful immigration conduct that a disinterested

67. The NLRB has occasionally relied on abuse of its processes through fraudulent misrepresentations to deprive a discriminatee of the protection of the NLRA. Precoat Metals, 341 N.L.R.B. 1137, 1139 (2004). In the present context, the issue would be whether fraudulent immigration misrepresentations could rise to the level of a willful false representation in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1001 (proscribing broadly, on pain of criminal penalty, falsification and concealment of material facts in any matter or proceeding within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Government). If they could, the NLRB attorney might be faced with professional responsibility issues for non-disclosure of the criminalized misrepresentations, in addition to having to contend with whatever action the NLRB might require under its rules.


70. These scenarios would be interesting even if purely theoretical. However, they almost all transpired in the course of a single case in which I was personally involved when formerly employed as an NLRB trial attorney.

71. See John Cuneo, Inc., 298 N.L.R.B. 856 (1990) (holding that if an employer proves employee misconduct upon which it did not rely in taking unlawful employment action, but for which it would have discharged any employee notwithstanding employee participation in protected conduct, reinstatement is not ordered and backpay is terminated on the date that the employer first acquired knowledge of the misconduct). Subsequent discovery of employee misconduct does not undermine a finding of a statutory violation, and the NLRB has found an employer’s discharge of unauthorized workers engaged in protected activity, in claimed compliance with immigration law, to be evidence of pretext if the employer knew about, and failed to act upon, unlawful employee immigration status existing before the protected activity. Concrete Form Walls, 346 N.L.R.B. 831 (2006).

72. Hoffman Plastic Compounds, Inc., 535 U.S. at 144-145. While the Court discussed the issue of the employee status of unauthorized workers somewhat abstractly under its prior holdings, any discussion of remedies for individuals the Court believed not to be statutory employees would have been superfluous. But see Agri Processors v. NLRB, 514 F.3d 1, 13 (D.C. Cir. 2008) (Kavanaugh, dissenting) (concluding that Hoffman majority did not explicitly hold unauthorized workers to be statutory employees).
attorney might conclude must be disclosed under ethical codes of conduct or professional responsibility.

C. Which Canon of Professional Responsibility?

After Hoffman, an NLRB attorney has a greater likelihood of becoming involved in cases in which he knows, or strongly suspects, that discriminatees or witnesses are unauthorized workers, or in which other unlawful immigration conduct is present. The question is whether these facts must be disclosed, and to whom. Disclosure obligations governing such a situation are a function of the canon of professional responsibility to which the involved attorney is bound. The question of which ethical “code” serves as a point of reference for an attorney engaged in federal administrative practice is not easy to answer. From the point of view of the attorney, the most immediate point of reference is the ethical code of the attorney’s state of bar admission. A second point of reference is any ethical code implemented by the attorney’s employer.

From the point of view of the administrative agency, however, the situation is unclear. The NLRB, like most federal agencies, does not require its attorneys to be admitted to practice in any particular jurisdiction.73 Thus, the NLRB would first have to decide whether to require its attorneys to comply with the code of the attorney’s state of admission, the state of the attorney’s practice (typically the location of an NLRB regional office), or with some other code applicable only to NLRB attorneys. If the NLRB accepted the applicability of state codes, it would face the prospect of applying the professional responsibility codes of each of the states in which its regional offices are located, and of the states of admission of every attorney in its employ, in connection with the precise professional responsibility question presented.

This interpretation is precisely the one used by the NLRB in connection with the only professional responsibility issue it has paid significant attention to;74 individuals, formerly employed as supervisors by presently-charged employers, who come forward to offer evidence adverse to their former employers in a current case. May the charged employer’s counsel, consistent with norms of professional responsibility, be passed over or “skipped” in an interview of the former supervisor conducted by an NLRB attorney?75 In this situation the NLRB might simply have devised a bright


74. In conducting research for this article, no agency guidance memorandum dedicated to a professional responsibility subject other than the skip counsel issue, see infra note 75, was uncovered.

75. The skip counsel issue is a variant of the general “anti-contact rule.” The Model Rules of Professional Conduct provide one articulation of the rule: “[i]n representing a client, a lawyer shall not communicate with a person the lawyer knows to be represented by another lawyer in the matter, unless the lawyer has the consent of the other lawyer or is authorized by law to do so.” MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT R. 4.2. The problem for the NLRB is whether a former supervisor of a represented
line agency rule authorizing such interviews. Instead, the NLRB opted in this situation, and now by virtue of agency policy has opted in all situations, to comply with the professional responsibility rules of an NLRB attorney’s state of bar admission and the rules of the state in which a regional office sits.76

The NLRB’s decision to follow state professional responsibility rules rather than enacting its own federal ethics rules is consistent with at least one other professional responsibility development in the federal sector. The courts have rejected the idea that Department of Justice prosecutors may be exempted, through federal regulation, from compliance with state “no contact” rules in federal litigation through a doctrine of implied preemption,77 a theory articulated in 1989 in the “Thornburgh Memorandum.”78 This theory was roundly defeated through Congressional enactment of the McDade Amendment and its interpretive regulations.79

The NLRB’s effective adoption of state professional responsibility codes, while rationally reactive to the Thornburgh fiasco, is not compulsory. The McDade rules, requiring that certain federal attorneys follow state ethics codes, do not by their terms apply to federal agency attorneys practicing outside of the Department of Justice.80 In theory, therefore, the

employer is “a person the [NLRB] lawyer knows to be represented by another lawyer in the matter . . . .” The problem arises because the answer varies between jurisdictions.

76. NLRB CASE HANDLING MANUAL (Part One), § 10058 (instructing that NLRB attorneys comply with the ethics codes adopted by their licensing State “and/or” the codes adopted by the state in which contact with a witness occurs, and with the ethics codes adopted by the federal courts before which they appear).


78. The Memorandum, subsequently codified as then-Department of Justice Regulation, 28 C.F.R. § 77.10(a), provided:

A communication with a current employee of an organization that qualifies as a represented party or represented person shall be considered to be a communication with the organization for purposes of this part only if the employee is a controlling individual. A ‘controlling individual’ is a current high-level employee who is known by the government to be participating as a decision maker in the determination of the organization’s legal position in the proceeding or investigation of the subject matter.

The regulation provided government prosecutors with access to represented persons in a manner that violated several state legal ethics codes. See, e.g., U.S. ex rel. O’Keeffe v. McDonnell Douglas Corp., 132 F.3d 1252 (8th Cir. 1998) (holding that a regulation permitting government contact with an employee of a represented organization, if the employee was not a “controlling individual,” was not authorized by statute and in conflict with Missouri ethics rules). See also William Glaberson, Thornburgh Policy Leads to a Sharp Ethics Battle, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 1, 1991, available at http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE2D7173AF932A35750C0A967958260 (last visited June 21, 2008).

79. 28 U.S.C. § 530B (attorney for federal government subject to state laws and rules, and local federal court rules, governing attorneys in each state where attorney engages in duties, to same extent and in same manner as other attorneys in state); see also interpretive regulations at 28 CFR §§ 77(1)-(5).

80. 28 CFR § 77.2(a) (defining “attorney” as Attorney General; Deputy Attorney General; Solicitor General; attorneys employed in Justice Department divisions; attorneys employed by the DEA; attorneys employed by the ATF; attorneys employed by the FBI or the Office of General Counsel of the FBI;
NL RB could promulgate professional responsibility rules that conflicted with state rules without violating federal law. So, for example, the agency might simply promulgate a rule authorizing its attorneys not to disclose violations of immigration law that are discovered.

Nevertheless, in attempting to follow state codes, which are largely the state-adopted Model Rules, the NLRB encounters a paradigm that primarily contemplates private adversarial regimes. While it is the agency’s prerogative to adopt this paradigm, state rules may not and probably will not address the precise question of an attorney’s obligation to disclose violations of immigration law discovered in federal agency litigation, or for that matter of many other professional responsibility questions unique to federal practice. Many states have little to say about public sector practice beyond adopting the Model Rule applicable to criminal prosecutors.

Indeed, returning to the example of the skip counsel problem, the NLRB rejected the approach of the Model Rules. The Rules would actually have permitted NLRB attorneys to contact and interview the individual formerly employed as a supervisor by a charged employer without the assent or presence of the employer’s counsel. The agency apparently preferred a more cautious approach—reflected in its so-called Skip Counsel Guidelines—in which attorneys were required to receive authorization from their superiors before interviewing former supervisors, prompting some observers to wonder aloud at the departure from the Model Rules. As Attorney Michael Posner noted:

When the Skip Counsel Guidelines of the Office of the General Counsel were issued on February 15, 2002, the Regions were mandated to contact Special Litigation prior to interviewing former supervisors or agents of a represented party in the absence of consent of the parties’ counsel due to the existence of different rules of professional conduct among the various states. [However,] Model Rule 4.2, Comment 7, provides that “consent of the organization’s lawyer is not required for communication with a former constituent.”

The NLRB probably took the more cautious approach of state-by-state canvassing of ethics rules, rather than relying on an unadopted Model Rule, because complaining parties might otherwise resort to challenges under state-specific professional responsibility rules to exert pressure on the attorneys employed in any other legal office in a Department of Justice agency; any United States Attorney; any Assistant United States Attorney; and various “Special Attorneys” and Independent Counsel.


82. See generally MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT R 3.8 (Special Responsibilities of a Prosecutor).

agency for political reasons or for use as leverage during litigation. The Skip Counsel Guidelines state, however, that the primary purpose of relying on state-specific ethical rules is "to safeguard Board attorneys from ethics violations." State variations on adoption of the Model Rules prompted the agency to canvass each state to ensure broad compliance with their professional responsibility schemes.

Why the NLRB's general caution in matters of professional responsibility? Professional responsibility violations are not, after all, self-enforcing. The reason centers on the enduring background of the contentious relations between labor and management. The structure of the NLRA "is focused on enforcement, with concentration on administrative agency models and on traditional legal processes to implement policy," creating "a propensity to litigate at the administrative agency level." In this litigious environment, labor and management, who are repeat players, could utilize professional responsibility complaints for tactical advantage in litigation. For example, an employer might argue that any testimony elicited from a former supervisor during an investigation outside of the presence of its counsel could not properly have been relied upon as a basis for initiating formal litigation.

In labor litigation transpiring in the midst of the hyper-politicized immigration debate, it is easy to imagine professional responsibility challenges coming from any number of interests. Accordingly, no less caution should be employed in navigating the murky professional responsi-


85. The NLRB's Office of the Inspector General occasionally investigates allegations of attorney misconduct and refers them to state Boards of Bar Overseers if it deems them arguably meritorious. See, e.g., Semiannual Report to Congress, April 1, 2001 through September 30, 2001, Investigations Program, OIG-I-272 (concluding that former Board Member's improper release of information relating to Board's deliberations and votes was in violation of the Agency's rules pertaining to the release of information and was prejudicial to the administration of justice and forwarding matter to Board Member's Bar association for review, which determined that the conduct was not in violation of its Rules of Professional Responsibility) available at http://www.nlrb.gov/nlrb/about/ig/reports/sar_9-30-01.html#5.

86. See Rafael Gely, Tale of Three Statutes... (and One Industry): A Case Study on the Competitive Effects of Regulation, 80 OR. L. REV. 947, 976 (2001) (citing Dennis A. Arouca & Henry H. Perritt, Jr., Transportation Labor Regulation: Is the Railway Labor Act or the National Labor Relations Act the Better Statutory Vehicle?, 36 LAB. L.J. 145, 149-50 (1985)).

87. Id.

88. Id. at 977.

89. See, e.g., supra note 56.

90. A group favoring restrictive immigration could, for example, allege that NLRB attorneys advancing claims in the interests of unauthorized workers breached professional responsibility duties. Boards of Bar overseers often investigate any facial allegation of attorney misconduct. The Maine Board of Bar Overseers, for example, asserts that "[e]ach written complaint is reviewed by the office of Bar Counsel and investigated if it involves alleged misconduct by a Maine attorney." Maine Board of Bar Overseers website available at http://www.mebarooversers.org/Attorney%20Complaints/attorney_complaints.htm
bility waters of immigration disclosure than has been employed in the agency's state-by-state canvassing of professional responsibility "no-contact" rules. Nevertheless, at the state level general professional responsibility rules have seldom been applied in a coherent manner in immigration-specific contexts, so it appears likely that the NLRB's essential analysis of these problems must rely on the Model Rules in the abstract.

D. Disclosure Analysis under the Model Rules of Professional Conduct

The central professional responsibility issue raised by Hoffman and its authorization of NLRB advocacy on behalf of the interests of unauthorized workers is the obligation to disclose unlawful conduct. The factual scenarios discussed in this article call into question whether an NLRB attorney would be required to disclose evidence of immigration law violations. One point of departure for a rule-based analysis of disclosure obligations is the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, and Model Rules 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, and 8.4 appear most germane.

1. Model Rule of Professional Conduct 3.3

Model Rule 3.3 generally requires that an attorney observe candor in dealing with a tribunal by disclosing "false" evidence of which the attorney is aware. Subsection (b) of the rule requires that an attorney "who repre-

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91. But see Stephen B. Burbank, State Ethical Codes and Federal Practice: Emerging Conflicts and Suggestions for Reform, 19 FORDHAM URB. L.J. 969, 972 (discussing the borrowing of state norms of professional conduct as federal law as "imported disuniformity").
92. Hilary Sheard, Ethical Issues in Immigration Proceedings, 9 GEO. IMMIGR. L.J. 719, 741 (discussing "the lack of uniformity among the ethical rules in the several states" as a "current cause for concern" in the context of federal immigration practice).
93. See supra note 64-72 and accompanying text.
94. Model Rule 3.8 does not appear to apply to NLRB attorneys functioning in an administrative context, even when it is adversarial, because that provision by its terms applies only to criminal prosecutors.
95. Model Rules of Prof'l Conduct R. 3.3 (Candor Toward The Tribunal):
(a) A lawyer shall not knowingly:
(1) make a false statement of fact or law to a tribunal or fail to correct a false statement of material fact or law previously made to the tribunal by the lawyer;
(2) fail to disclose to the tribunal legal authority in the controlling jurisdiction known to the lawyer to be directly adverse to the position of the client and not disclosed by opposing counsel; or
(3) offer evidence that the lawyer knows to be false. If a lawyer, the lawyer's client, or a witness called by the lawyer, has offered material evidence and the lawyer comes to know of its falsity, the lawyer shall take reasonable remedial measures, including, if necessary, disclosure to the tribunal. A lawyer may refuse to offer evidence, other than the testimony of a defendant in a criminal matter, that the lawyer reasonably believes is false.
(b) A lawyer who represents a client in an adjudicative proceeding and who knows that a person intends to engage, is engaging or has engaged in criminal or fraudulent conduct related to the proceeding shall take reasonable remedial measures, including, if necessary, disclosure to the tribunal.
(c) The duties stated in paragraphs (a) and (b) continue to the conclusion of the proceeding, and apply even if compliance requires disclosure of information otherwise protected by Rule 1.6.
resents a client in an adjudicative proceeding” take “reasonable remedial measures” with the tribunal, if the lawyer knows that “a person intends to engage, is engaging, or has engaged in criminal or fraudulent conduct related to the proceeding.” Assuming that an NLRB attorney is, within the meaning of the rule, representing a client in an adjudicative proceeding, the rule appears to additionally require that the attorney take “remedial measures” if an admission of a present violation of immigration law is tantamount to “criminal or fraudulent conduct related to the proceeding.” Courts have also found that an attorney may have an affirmative duty to investigate evidence the attorney intends to offer.

The Hoffman Memorandum instructs that a discriminatee’s immigration status not be affirmatively investigated by an NLRB attorney unless a charged employer comes forward with evidence establishing that a discriminatee is “undocumented.” While it is true that regions are instructed not to seek backpay in the event that the undocumented status of an employee is established, the additional suggestion in the Memorandum is that the burden of establishing immigration status be placed exclusively on the employer. Thus, an NLRB attorney could reasonably conclude that the instruction not to investigate the issue of immigration status amounted to a directive to ignore even the most transparent immigration violations.

(d) In an ex parte proceeding, a lawyer shall inform the tribunal of all material facts known to the lawyer that will enable the tribunal to make an informed decision, whether or not the facts are adverse.

96. Model Rule of Professional Conduct, Rule 1.0(m) defines a tribunal in relevant part as an “administrative agency or other body acting in an adjudicative capacity.” NLRB adversarial administrative trials fit comfortably within this definition, though there is a legitimate question as to whether a matter could be “remedied” by disclosure to prosecutorial officials. The General Counsel and administrative law judges are in effect bifurcated sectors of the same administrative unit. It might therefore be argued that disclosure of immigration violations to prosecutorial officials is tantamount to disclosure to the tribunal, thereby satisfying the attorney’s duty under Rule 3.3.

97. See supra note 95.

98. Model Rule of Professional Conduct 1.13(a) states that “[a] lawyer employed or retained by an organization represents the organization acting through its duly authorized constituents.” Opinions differ as to whether an attorney engaged in government practice represents the entire government or the particular administrative agency for which the attorney is immediately employed. See MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT FOR FED. LAW. R. 1.13 cmt. (Federal Bar Association 1990). The Federal Bar Association’s Model Rules flatly conclude that the federal attorney’s client is the administrative agency. Id. R. 1.13(a). These rules are strictly advisory, however.

99. See supra note 95. NLRB proceedings would appear to fit the definition of an adjudicative proceeding. Model Rule 3.9 cmt. 1, states that the rule applies to lawyers practicing before “legislatures, municipal councils, and executive and administrative agencies acting in a rule-making or policy-making capacity . . . .” (emphasis added).

100. MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT R. 3.3(b).

101. Patricia F. Reilly, Ethics: Balancing Ethical Disclosure Requirements with Statutory Regulations for Lawyers Practicing Before Regulatory Agencies, 46 OKLA. L. REV. 325, 337-38 (1993) (citing Wyle v. R.J. Reynolds Indus., 709 F.2d 585, 590 (9th Cir. 1983) (holding law firm’s failure to investigate client’s denials of unlawful conduct, despite client’s prior false averments on similar matter, tantamount to knowledge of the client’s false representations)).

102. Hoffman Memorandum, supra note 32, at 4, § E.
A complete analysis under the rule would depend on the facts that became known to the NLRB attorney. If, for example, the attorney learned only in the most general terms that a discriminatee was unauthorized, the attorney may have no knowledge of a crime. Under current immigration law the mere presence of an unauthorized immigrant within the United States is a civil but not a criminal violation; the immigrant would be subject to deportation but not to criminal sanction.\textsuperscript{103}

On the other hand, the mere presence of an unauthorized worker could be considered fraudulent conduct when assessed from the perspective of an employer. If the employer had previously inquired of the discriminatee about immigration status, which in itself would be an unlawfully inadequate investigation of a worker's status on the employer's part under the I-9 regime,\textsuperscript{104} and the NLRB attorney became aware that the worker falsely told the employer that he or she was authorized, a professional responsibility issue may arise. In that instance, the attorney will arguably have come under a disclosure duty pursuant to the rule in light of discovered fraudulent conduct.\textsuperscript{105}

Even if the NLRB attorney does not obtain actual knowledge of the commission of either a crime or fraud through a witness' admission, or through documents, the circumstances suggesting immigration violations could become sufficiently obvious\textsuperscript{106} that a court would conclude the attorney had a duty to investigate further, contrary to the Hoffman Memorandum's directives. For example, regional offices routinely require discriminatees to provide social security numbers during pre-trial investigation so that earnings information may be obtained from the social security administration and reasonably accurate backpay calculations can be performed to facilitate possible pre-trial settlement.\textsuperscript{107} If discriminatees decline to provide social security numbers, provide numbers that the social security administration cannot match to any individual, or provide numbers producing identities or other information inconsistent with the NLRB regional office's records, the attorney assigned to such a case may arguably

\textsuperscript{103} See Cunningham-Parmer, \textit{supra} note 23, at 63-64 (observing that, while mere unauthorized presence is not criminal, entering the country without inspection, reentering the country following deportation, and fraudulent presentation of documents to satisfy employment-related immigration verification requirements are crimes); see also Cimini, \textit{supra} note 57, at 358-59. Indeed, one of the provisions of the failed Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (HR 4437) would have criminalized the mere presence in the country of an unauthorized immigrant.

\textsuperscript{104} See 8 U.S.C. § 1324a(b) (2000).

\textsuperscript{105} It is reasonable to doubt that admissions of this type would be made to NLRB attorneys, though practitioners know them to be common. NLRB attorneys operate in a litigation environment lacking discovery rules and must as a matter of basic trial tactics encourage witnesses to provide potentially damaging information not uncovered in the pre-trial investigation that could be placed in issue at trial. An open-ended question posed to a witness during trial preparation could produce immigration information the attorney had not sought.

\textsuperscript{106} See infra note 121 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{107} See NLRB \textit{CaseHandling Manual} (Part Three), § 10504.4.
have come under a duty to investigate the surrounding circumstances more fully.

Whether the immigration violation of which the NLRB attorney becomes aware is classified as a crime or a fraud, it might in either event be argued that the conduct did not occur in connection with “the proceeding,” within the meaning of Rule 3.3(b), because it preceded the operative events in the NLRB case. The counterargument to this position might be that immigration violations are ongoing until a worker’s immigration status is regularized. Another response might be that, because immigration status is material to the question of remedy, misrepresentations in connection with the status have an adequate nexus to “the proceeding” to trigger the rule. In any event, the language of 3.3(a)(1) and (a)(3) is suggestive of disclosure obligations extending beyond a discrete proceeding.\(^\text{108}\)

There are situations beyond the mere unlawful presence of a worker that may communicate the existence of underlying criminal, as opposed to unlawful civil, conduct more forcefully. Under the strict I-9 regime, for example, tender of fraudulent documents to obtain employment is an independent criminal violation,\(^\text{109}\) as are false representations of citizenship to an employer.\(^\text{110}\) An NLRB attorney’s awareness of these crimes could squarely present a Rule 3.3 issue.\(^\text{111}\)

Should an NLRB attorney become aware that a discriminatee made a false representation of identity to the NLRB during a pre-trial investigation, Rule 3.3(a)(1), which prohibits an attorney from making a false statement of fact or law to a tribunal, or from failing to correct a false statement of material fact or law previously made to a tribunal by an attorney, may come into play.\(^\text{112}\) In that event, even though the misrepresentation would not have occurred during trial,\(^\text{113}\) pleadings would necessarily communicate its substance to an NLRB administrative law judge because NLRB complaints

\(^{108}\) See supra note 95. Unlike Model Rule 3.3(b), there is no explicit limitation of the disclosure obligation to a discrete proceeding under these provisions.

\(^{109}\) 8 C.F.R. § 274a.2(3).


\(^{112}\) See supra note 95.

\(^{113}\) Compare U.S. v. Shafer Equip. Co., 11 F.3d 450 (4th Cir. 1993) (upholding District Court’s pre-trial censure of Department of Justice attorneys for failing to disclose that expert witness lied about academic credentials and qualifications, and for continuing litigation and filing court papers based on administrative record developed in part by witness in violation of West Virginia’s version of Rule 3.3 and the broader general duty of candor required to protect the integrity of the judicial process).
are required to plead the identity of discriminatees with particularity. In that circumstance, the NLRB attorney may have an obligation under the rule to correct the false statement contained in the pleading to the extent that the identity of a discriminatee is material to the underlying case.

An additional problem potentially arises under Rule 3.3(a)(3), which forbids an attorney from offering evidence that the attorney knows to be false. The most obvious application of this rule would involve a witness' substantively false testimony. Suppose, however, that an NLRB attorney comes to learn that the identity of an unauthorized worker is not as it was represented during the pre-trial investigation. Such a development could make it difficult for the attorney even to call the witness to testify without informing the tribunal of the misrepresentation. A variation of this application could arise if a discriminatee or witness misrepresented identity or immigration status in a pre-trial affidavit, and the affidavit formally comes into evidence. In that situation, the NLRB attorney would arguably have an obligation to remedy any statement contained in the affidavit that is known by the attorney to be false.

The comments to Rule 3.3 are generally helpful in each of these contexts. Most significantly, they make clear that the prohibition against offering false evidence applies only if an attorney knows the evidence to be false. The NLRB attorney may still present evidence to the administrative law judge if the attorney has merely a reasonable belief of its falsity. Accordingly, absent an unequivocal admission from the discriminatee that immigration law has been violated, or the possession by the attorney of documents clearly showing that unlawful conduct has transpired, the NLRB attorney would not have an obligation under the Model Rules to take reme-

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114. NLRB Case Handling Manual (Part One), § 10264.2. The drafter of the complaint retrieves the identity of alleged discriminatees from the regional investigative file. Id. at § 10262. If the investigative file is inaccurate, the complaint is likely to be inaccurate.

115. See supra note 95.

116. Although pre-trial affidavits are available to a charged party at trial for purposes of impeaching the witness who provided the affidavit during cross-examination, it is not introduced into the record in its entirety as substantive evidence. See NLRB Division of Judges Bench Book, § 13-207. If, however, a dispute arises over the contents of the affidavit, the NLRB trial attorney may offer it in its complete form, and an administrative law judge would commit error by refusing to admit it. Id. § 13-813 (citing J. G. Braun Co., 126 N.L.R.B. 368, 369 n.3 (1960)).

117. The duty to disclose fraudulent evidence proffered to a tribunal at any stage of a proceeding presents a difficult issue because of the inherent conflict of that duty with an attorney's duty to protect a client's confidences. See, e.g., Digest of Rhode Island Ethics Advisory Panel, Opinion #91-76, Request #201, Dec. 4, 1991 available at http://www.courts.state.ri.us/supreme/ethics/pdfadvisoryopinions/91-76.pdf (last visited July 19, 2008) (advising an attorney who came to know that an employee of his client offered false testimony in his deposition to encourage the client to persuade employee to correct the error and, failing correction, to inform the court).


119. Id. at R. 3.3 cmt. 8.
dial measures with the NLRB tribunal, however defined. Nevertheless, the comments importantly refine this general rule by observing that an attorney’s knowledge that evidence is false can be inferred from the circumstances and that the attorney cannot ignore an “obvious falsehood.”

Even in the absence of a prohibition on offering evidence only “reasonably believed” to be false, Rule 3.3’s comments also provide that an NLRB attorney would be permitted, in theory, to refuse to offer such evidence because “[o]ffering such proof may reflect adversely on the lawyer’s ability to discriminate in the quality of evidence and thus impair the lawyer’s effectiveness as an advocate.” A difficulty is presented if there is a difference of opinion between the NLRB and one of its attorneys as to whether evidence should be offered. For example, the attorney and the agency may have different views about whether a set of facts creates only a reasonable belief as to the falsity of evidence, or about the significance of the falsity if it is clearly present.

The NLRB may take the position that, because immigration status is irrelevant to the question of whether the NLRA has been violated—under Hoffman, evidence of immigration violations is simply “irrelevant” to the proceeding. But that position ignores the complexity of Rule 3.3, and would presume that false representations of immigration status, rendered irrelevant to the question of statutory coverage after Hoffman, are identical to false representations of material fact within the meaning of Model Rule 3.3. That conclusion seems dubious.

Model Rule 3.3, Comment 7, may provide both the NLRB and the attorney with some cover. It states that, while the “duties [of 3.3(a) and (b)] apply to all lawyers, including defense counsel in criminal cases[,] . . . [i]n some jurisdictions . . . courts have required counsel to present the accused as a witness or to give a narrative statement if the accused so desires, even if counsel knows that the testimony or statement will be false.” It might

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120. Id.
121. Id. For the rule to have any real possibility of application, the “knowledge” requirement must be flexible, for as one commentator has noted, “[i]f ‘actual knowledge’ were limited to matters of personal perception, we would be left . . . with an empty rule, since it must be a true rarity when a client’s lawyer was present at her client’s crime and is still called on to defend him.” Edward L. Kimball, When Does a Lawyer Know Her Client Will Commit Perjury?, 2 GEO. J. LEGAL ETHICS 579, 580 (1988-89).
122. MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT R. 3.3 cmt. 9.
123. Some commentators do not see this as a problem. In their view, government attorneys owe no ethical duty to a broader public interest. Moreover, they argue that attempts by an attorney to impose such a duty on an agency, assuming it could be identified, would create separation of powers issues by exalting privately held ethical opinions over the opinions of agency heads, who, unlike career attorneys, are accountable to the democratically elected executive. Jonathan R. Macey & Geoffrey P. Miller, Reflection on Professional Responsibility in a Regulatory State, 63 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 1105, 1116 (1995). This reasonable position offers little aid to the ensnared litigator attempting to predict the position of his licensing state Bar.
124. MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT R. 3.3 cmt. 7.
therefore be argued that the NLRB could formally direct the NLRB attorney to offer, without disclosure, evidence the attorney knows or strongly believes to be false, and that the agency’s direction would provide the attorney with an escape from censure under the rule.

2. Model Rule of Professional Conduct 3.4

Cases involving unauthorized workers seem intuitively likely to generate situations in which witnesses fail to provide their true identity out of fear that the information will be conveyed to the immigration authorities. Model Rule 3.4\textsuperscript{125} generally requires that an attorney be “fair” to an adversary.\textsuperscript{126} One specific refinement of the broad rule is subsection (b)’s prohibition of an attorney from “assisting” a witness to testify falsely. If a witness or a discriminatee was known by an NLRB attorney to have misrepresented identity in the course of an NLRB proceeding, the attorney would find it difficult to call the individual to testify at trial without suborning perjury. This would be particularly true if the individual had used a false identity within the body of a pre-trial affidavit, or in a manner that resulted in the false identity appearing in formal pleadings. In that case, if the attorney called the witness and failed to disclose the misrepresented identity, an adversary would have a persuasive argument that the attorney had rendered assistance in the furtherance of false testimony.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{125} Id. at R. 3.4 (Fairness To Opposing Party And Counsel):
A lawyer shall not:
(a) unlawfully obstruct another party’s access to evidence or unlawfully alter, destroy or conceal a document or other material having potential evidentiary value. A lawyer shall not counsel or assist another person to do any such act;
(b) falsify evidence, counsel or assist a witness to testify falsely, or offer an inducement to a witness that is prohibited by law;
(c) knowingly disobey an obligation under the rules of a tribunal except for an open refusal based on an assertion that no valid obligation exists;
(d) in pretrial procedure, make a frivolous discovery request or fail to make reasonably diligent effort to comply with a legally proper discovery request by an opposing party;
(e) in trial, allude to any matter that the lawyer does not reasonably believe is relevant or that will not be supported by admissible evidence, assert personal knowledge of facts in issue except when testifying as a witness, or state a personal opinion as to the justness of a cause, the credibility of a witness, the culpability of a civil litigant or the guilt or innocence of an accused; or
(f) request a person other than a client to refrain from voluntarily giving relevant information to another party unless:
(1) the person is a relative or an employee or other agent of a client; and
(2) the lawyer reasonably believes that the person’s interests will not be adversely affected by refraining from giving such information.

\textsuperscript{126} Id.

\textsuperscript{127} See Florida Bar v. Burkich-Burrell, 659 So. 2d 1082 (Fla. 1995) (applying Florida’s version of Rule 3.4, the court upheld Bar authorities’ censure of an attorney for failing to check, review or correct interrogatory responses, the underlying facts of which the attorney had personal knowledge, and was therefore in a position to correct, because the attorney had a duty to review sworn answers to interrogatories for correctness even if the attorney took no part in preparing them).
3. Model Rule of Professional Conduct 4.1

The *Hoffman* case did not end the relevance of immigration status in NLRA cases because that status goes directly to the question of remedy, an issue that will often arise in pre-trial settlement negotiations. Model Rule 4.1 addresses an attorney's "truthfulness in statements to others." Subsection (b) applies to disclosure of facts necessary to avoid assistance of a client in perpetrating a criminal or fraudulent act, and is therefore probably inapplicable to the kinds of factual circumstances that have been under discussion because unauthorized workers are not the clients of NLRB attorneys. Subsection (a), however, applies to attorney conduct outside the attorney-client relationship. An attorney is broadly prohibited from making a false statement of material fact to a third person. The question an NLRB attorney could encounter under this provision is whether his failure to disclose a discriminatee's known immigration violations to a charged, unrepresented employer during pre-trial investigation or settlement negotiations could represent a "false statement of material fact or law." The materiality of immigration status in this posture results from the likely reduction of the employer's backpay liability, which could weigh heavily in any decision to settle a case.

The comments to Model Rule 4.1 state that "[m]isrepresentations can also occur by partially true but misleading statements or omissions that are the equivalent of affirmative false statements." A significant factual

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128. Rule 4.1 states, "In the course of representing a client a lawyer shall not knowingly (a) make a false statement of material fact or law to a third person; or (b) fail to disclose a material fact when disclosure is necessary to avoid assisting a criminal or fraudulent act by a client, unless disclosure is prohibited by Rule 1.6."

129. Id.


131. See supra note 128.

132. Some jurisdictions apply their versions of Model Rule 4.1, rather than Model Rule 3.3, to require disclosures of fraud to tribunals made during the prehearing phases of a claim. See Philadelphia Bar Association Ethics Opinion, Opinion 88-7 (1988), available at http://www.philadelphiabar.org/page/EthicsOpinion88-7?appNum=2&wosid=C7VRdjQ3vYr5WSSgEu7tM (advising an attorney to withdraw representation from a client who made fraudulent claims to the social security administration if the attorney refused to disclose fraud and client refused to recant it).

133. In fiscal year 2006, the NLRB settled 96.7% of the cases in which its investigations found violations of the NLRA. Regional offices negotiated those settlements. See General Counsel's Summary of Operations FY 2006, available at http://www.nlrb.gov/shared_files/GC%20Memo/2007/GC%2007-03%20Summary%20of%20Operations%20FY%2006.htm. This means that most backpay calculations are made in regional offices. Backpay issues involving immigration status must be submitted to the General Counsel's Division of Advice in Washington, D.C. Hoffman Memorandum, supra note 32, at 3, § C. But those issues must be identified by regional offices before they can be submitted to the Division of Advice. Given the time and resource pressures that are a fact of regional office life, see generally Fred Feinstein, *The Challenge of Being General Counsel*, 16 LAB. LAW. 19, 37 (2000), available at http://www.bna.com/bnabooks/ababna/laborlawyer/16.1.pdf, it is entirely possible that immigration facts relevant to backpay could simply be missed or glossed over.

omission appears adequate to trigger the rule.\textsuperscript{135} If a discriminatee informed an investigating NLRB attorney that the discriminatee was unauthorized, it would be an arguable violation of Rule 4.1 for the attorney to attempt settlement without informing the charged, unrepresented employer about the full details underlying the settlement.\textsuperscript{136} Presumably, however, the attorney could not breach the rule by proposing a settlement that did not include backpay for an unauthorized discriminatee.\textsuperscript{137}

4. Model Rule of Professional Conduct 8.4

Model Rule 8.4\textsuperscript{138} addresses general attorney misconduct and broadly proscribes it. The issue kept alive by Hoffman is whether an attorney’s failure to disclose immigration violations amounts to general misconduct or dishonesty. The states interpret their adopted versions of Rule 8.4 derivatively: it is automatically violated if there is a contemporaneous violation of any other rule of professional conduct. The language in subsection (a) compels this conclusion because it states that “[i]t is professional misconduct for a lawyer to . . . violate or attempt to violate the Rules of Professional Conduct . . . .”\textsuperscript{139} Aside from this derivative violation of the rule, there are two potential independent violations worthy of mention.

First, under subsection (c), it is professional misconduct for an attorney to “engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation.”\textsuperscript{140} The language is very broad and could easily extend to the types of immigration disclosure issues under discussion. Second, under

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{135} See Rhode Island Supreme Court Ethics Advisory Panel, Opinion No. 97-01, Request No. 702, Issued January 9, 1997, available at http://www.courts.state.ri.us/supreme/ethics/pdfadvisoryopinions/97-01.pdf (opining that attorney representing plaintiff-decedent’s beneficiary would violate Rules 3.3 and 4.1 by failing to disclose the fact of plaintiff’s death prior to accepting defendant’s offer of settlement). By analogy, it might be argued that an NLRB attorney has an obligation to disclose a discriminatee’s unauthorized worker status prior to entering into an NLRA settlement, particularly because the NLRB attorney’s countervailing duty of client confidentiality is ambiguous.
  \item \textsuperscript{136} See supra note 135 and accompanying text.
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Given a rudimentary understanding of backpay, it should be obvious to an employer when the backpay of a discriminatee has not been included in a settlement.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Model Rules of Prof’l Conduct R. 8.4 (Misconduct):
    \begin{itemize}
      \item It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:
      \begin{itemize}
        \item (a) violate or attempt to violate the Rules of Professional Conduct, knowingly assist or induce another to do so, or do so through the acts of another;
        \item (b) commit a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer’s honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer in other respects;
        \item (c) engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation;
        \item (d) engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice;
        \item (e) state or imply an ability to influence improperly a government agency or official or to achieve results by means that violate the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law; or
        \item (f) knowingly assist a judge or judicial officer in conduct that is a violation of applicable rules of judicial conduct or other law.
      \end{itemize}
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{139} See id.; see, e.g., L.S. v. Mississippi Bar, 649 So. 2d 810, 814 (Miss. 1994) (noting that there is always a violation of Rule 8.4 if there is a violation of any other rule).
  \item \textsuperscript{140} Model Rules of Prof’l Conduct R. 8.4, supra note 138.
\end{itemize}
subsection (d) it is professional misconduct for an attorney to “engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice.”

Although Comment 4 to the rule observes that a finding of significant interference with the administration of justice has historically been assumed to require a crime of “moral turpitude,” Comment 5 cautions that “[l]awyers holding public office assume legal responsibilities going beyond those of other citizens. A lawyer’s abuse of public office can suggest an inability to fulfill the professional role of lawyers.” That language has expansive and uncertain connotations.

This foray into the Model Rules reveals a wide variety of arguments available to adversaries seeking to stir the professional responsibility pot. In the present atmosphere of immigration controversy, the NLRB would do well to remove the pot from the fire.

While the notion of the attorney’s moral “trilemma” of being required to “know everything, to keep it in confidence, and to reveal it to the court” is not new, it is less susceptible of sympathetic treatment in these circumstances. Why should state ethics boards agree that NLRB attorneys admitted in their jurisdictions, regardless of the identity of their legal employer, are entitled to fail to disclose evidence of crimes or wrongdoing to a tribunal? The proposition is even more troublesome when it is considered that, while one arm of the organizational client of the attorney, the NLRB prosecutorial division, demands confidentiality in connection with the collection of evidence arguably subject to disclosure, the NLRB adjudicative arm is denied the disclosure. Litigants are caught in the middle. It is easy to imagine state ethics boards penetrating this veil by treating the attorney-client relationship between the NLRB attorney and the NLRB prosecutorial arm as a fiction, and requiring absolute disclosure of immigration violations to the NLRB adjudicative arm.

141. Id.


143. Id. See also State Bar of Michigan, Opinion # RI-166 (June 3, 1993), available at http://www.michbar.org/opinions/ethics/numbered_opinions/ri-166.htm?CFID=2525549&CFTOKEN=84086261 (last visited July 19, 2008) (opining that attorney member of administrative board had duty to disclose new material discovered in file by attorney after board heard the case, and that failure to do so would violate Michigan’s version of Rule 8.4).

144. See, e.g., Attorney Grievance Comm’n v. Floyd, 929 A.2d 61, 68 (Md. 2007) (holding that attorney’s concealment from federal employer that employment recommendation was written by husband violated Maryland’s version of Rule 8.4).

E. Two Possibilities for Amelioration

Clearly, the Hoffman Memorandum creates vulnerabilities for NLRB attorneys by failing to take on the professional responsibility issues generated by Hoffman. One possibility for dealing with conflicting professional responsibility norms, or for dealing with the absence of any norm directly applicable to immigration-related disclosures, is for the NLRB to take a hard look at Model Rule 8.5, which among other things addresses choice of law problems in multijurisdictional contexts.\textsuperscript{146} The various theories for attorney discipline under the Model Rules discussed in the previous section are vexing because the rules do not appear to apply to attorneys employed by and engaged in practice before federal administrative agencies. These agencies collectively represent a de facto jurisdiction. Application of state ethics codes to a federal jurisdiction in effect thrusts federal attorneys into a species of multi-jurisdictional practice containing tensions that are, in reality, the residue of federalism.

The American Bar Association has taken note that multi-jurisdictional practice is becoming much more common.\textsuperscript{147} In many practice areas the nationwide and international practice of law has created potential, in an analogous fashion, for professional responsibility conflict between jurisdictions.\textsuperscript{148}

In recognition of this evolving reality of legal practice, the ABA promulgated Model Rule 8.5 in 2002.\textsuperscript{149} While the full history of the rule is beyond the scope of this article, one feature of it has direct application to an NLRB attorney facing the prospect of competing ethical norms. Subsection (b)(1) of the rule states that "[i]n any exercise of the disciplinary authority of this jurisdiction . . . for conduct in connection with a matter pending before a tribunal, the rules of the jurisdiction in which the tribunal sits [a-}

\textsuperscript{146} MODEL RULES OF PROF'L CONDUCT R. 8.5 (Maintaining The Integrity Of The Profession):
\hspace{1em} (a) Disciplinary Authority. A lawyer admitted to practice in this jurisdiction is subject to the disciplinary authority of this jurisdiction, regardless of where the lawyer's conduct occurs. A lawyer not admitted in this jurisdiction is also subject to the disciplinary authority of this jurisdiction if the lawyer provides or offers to provide any legal services in this jurisdiction. A lawyer may be subject to the disciplinary authority of both this jurisdiction and another jurisdiction for the same conduct.
\hspace{1em} (b) Choice of Law. In any exercise of the disciplinary authority of this jurisdiction, the rules of professional conduct to be applied shall be as follows:
\hspace{1em} (1) for conduct in connection with a matter pending before a tribunal, the rules of the jurisdiction in which the tribunal sits, unless the rules of the tribunal provide otherwise; and
\hspace{1em} (2) for any other conduct, the rules of the jurisdiction in which the lawyer's conduct occurred, or, if the predominant effect of the conduct is in a different jurisdiction, the rules of that jurisdiction shall be applied to the conduct. A lawyer shall not be subject to discipline if the lawyer's conduct conforms to the rules of a jurisdiction in which the lawyer reasonably believes the predominant effect of the lawyer's conduct will occur.


\textsuperscript{148} Id. at 3.

\textsuperscript{149} See MODEL RULES OF PROF'L CONDUCT R. 8.5, supra note 146.
ply], unless the rules of the tribunal provide otherwise." The language suggests that NLRB attorneys could adhere to NLRB-created ethics rules when both the attorney's state of admission and the state in which the attorney's regional office is located have adopted Model Rule 8.5. Following an agency rule in the case of conflicting or nonexistent professional responsibility norms, as allowed by Rule 8.5, would be consistent with the NLRB's policy of following state ethical provisions when enacting agency rules addressing ambiguous ethical situations.

More audaciously, the NLRB could simply apply Model Rule 8.5 to all situations of professional responsibility rules conflict as a consensus ABA opinion on how to solve multijurisdictional problems. An ABA-deferential approach would be less objectionable to state Bar authorities than resorting to an agency-created rule and would avoid criticism on federalism grounds. To further fend off criticisms of heavy-handedness in the area of immigration disclosure, the NLRB could apply disclosure rules used by a majority of jurisdictions where they can be identified, as its preferred rules when sitting as a "tribunal" within the meaning of Rule 8.5. The ethics rule imposed through Model Rule 8.5 could simply hold that an NLRB attorney's exclusive ethical obligation upon learning of immigration violations is to report them to agency superiors. The attorney's compliance with such a rule would simultaneously satisfy the NLRB's institutional re-

150. Id.

151. As of January 24, 2008, thirty-six states had adopted a rule identical or similar to Model Rule 8.5. See AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, STATE IMPLEMENTATION OF ABA MODEL RULE 8.5, available at http://www.abanet.org/cpr/mjp/quick-guide_8.5.pdf. Several regional offices sitting in high-immigration areas would be in a position to apply the rule as the governing norm in their geographic area. The 2000 Census reflected that, as of the year 2000, California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois and New Jersey accounted for more than two-thirds of the foreign-born resident count. See U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, CENSUS 2000 SUMMARY FILE 3, PCT19, PLACE OF BIRTH FOR THE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION, available at http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/MetadataBrowserServlet?type=dataset&id=DEC_2000_SF3_U&_lang=en. Although the Census does not break down the "undocumented immigration" population by state, the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that thirty per cent of the foreign-born population is undocumented. PEW HISPANIC CENTER, THE SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNAUTHORIZED MIGRANT POPULATION IN THE U.S. 4 (Mar. 7, 2006). California, New Jersey and Florida have enacted rules similar or identical to Rule 8.5; New York and Florida have recommendations pending to enact a rule identical to 8.5. See STATE IMPLEMENTATION OF RULE 8.5, supra.

152. NLRB CASEHANDLING MANUAL (Part One), § 10058. See supra note 76 and accompanying text.


154. The procedure employed could approximate MODEL RULES OF PROF'L CONDUCT R. 1.13(b):

If a lawyer for an organization knows that an officer, employee or other person associated with the organization is engaged in action, intends to act or refuses to act in a matter related to the representation that is a violation of a legal obligation to the organization, or a violation of law that reasonably might be imputed to the organization, and that is likely to result in substantial injury to the organization, then the lawyer shall proceed as is reasonably necessary in the best interest of the organization. Unless the lawyer reasonably believes that it is not necessary in the best interest of the organization to do so, the lawyer shall refer the matter to higher
quirements and the professional responsibility objectives of the NLRB attorney.

Alternatively, the NLRB could travel the same path that it has traveled in the context of the no-contact rule: it could simply direct its Office of Special Litigation to conduct a state-by-state canvassing of whatever professional rules may be applicable to immigration disclosures and broadly disseminate the results of that canvassing. In the event that problematic disclosure rules are uncovered, the Office could seek an advisory ethics opinion from the bar counsel of the state in question on particular points of law. Attorneys admitted in states requiring disclosure in common immigration scenarios could be sequestered from this class of cases. The problem with choosing a state-by-state approach is that state professional responsibility law is likely to be inchoate, partly because of the paucity of state doctrine dealing with these issues, and partly because of the failure of either the Model Rules or of the canons of particular states to define with clarity the professional responsibility duties of government attorneys outside of the criminal context.

Whichever option the NLRB might choose to pursue will put its investigating and trial attorneys in a superior position than the one in which they currently find themselves. Ultimately, NLRB attorneys are vulnerable to allegations of failing to disclose illegal conduct as required by ethical canons because there is no immediately apparent countervailing interest of client confidentiality that would forbid such a disclosure. Even if such an interest exists, because the government-at-large or the NLRB is the NLRB attorney's client, the overall perception would probably be that the agency's reliance on that interest was an attempt, aided by its attorneys, to ignore immigration illegality. Professional responsibility ambiguity, if left unchecked, may provide an opening for opponents of labor law coverage of unauthorized workers to interfere with appropriate prosecution of these important emerging cases at the intersection of labor and immigration law. The NLRB should act to prevent the interference.

IV.

CREDIBILITY PARADOX

A. Credibility in NLRB Proceedings Generally

Hoffman's reaffirmation of the NLRA employee status of unauthorized workers means that the testimony of these workers, who are indispensable and immediate witnesses of employers' NLRA violations, will be taken and relied upon by the NLRB to prosecute those violations. This is the second paradox Hoffman has unleashed. Unauthorized workers who unlawfully enter or maintain residence in the country through a series of misrepresenta-

authority in the organization, including, if warranted by the circumstances to the highest authority that can act on behalf of the organization as determined by applicable law.
tions must be found credible by judges, who are arguably predisposed to view the workers' actions as a categorical stain on credibility. The NLRB must find a way to prevent the presumptive discrediting of witnesses based on their status as unauthorized workers.

Even in ordinary NLRB trials, the credibility of witnesses is extremely important; pre-trial investigations are conducted by affidavit and the assertions of charging party witnesses are accepted as true for purposes of the investigation unless disproved by objective evidence. In the case of a discharge alleged to have violated the NLRA, for example, evidence of an employer's anti-union motive—a necessary element of the NLRB's prima facie case—may consist exclusively of an employee's account of the statements of an employer's agent. The same is true of employee accounts of threats and coercive statements that, standing alone, would violate the NLRA. In a typical case, these witness statements must be substantially credited, both by the administrative law judge hearing the case and, ultimately, by the NLRB in order to make out a violation. Courts take seriously the right of employers to impeach the credibility of witnesses testifying about these kinds of statements, which are of independent legal significance. As the Fourth Circuit has remarked, "[i]mpeachment evidence is crucial in [NLRB] proceedings, since the ALJ sits as judge and jury." More generally, the Supreme Court has emphasized that the determination of "the weight and credibility of the evidence is the special province of the trier of fact." Furthermore, "[t]he rationale for deference to the original finder of fact is not limited to the superiority of the trial judge's position to make determinations of credibility. The trial judge's major role is the determination of fact, and with experience in fulfilling that role comes expertise." An NLRB trial attorney has good reason to be concerned about the practical finality of credibility determinations given the deference afforded administrative law judges by both the NLRB and the circuit courts.

155. See NLRB CASEHANDLING MANUAL (Part One) § 10060.
156. See id. § 10064.
158. The ancient and still viable NLRB case addressing witness credibility is Standard Dry Wall Prods., Inc., 91 N.L.R.B. 544, 544-45 (1950) (holding that it is the policy of the NLRB to attach great weight to a fact finder's credibility findings based on demeanor, and that those findings will not be overruled except where the clear preponderance of all the relevant evidence convinces the NLRB that the fact finder's findings were incorrect). Technically, the NLRB possesses the right to visit all trial level findings de novo. 5 U.S.C. § 557(b).
162. See, e.g., NLRB v. Gordon, 792 F.2d 29, 32 (2d Cir. 1986) (holding that NLRB's findings, based on ALJ's assessment of witness credibility, will not be overturned by circuit unless it is "hopelessly incredible" or in contradiction of "either the law of nature or undisputed documentary testimony").
B. Trial Attorney's Dilemma

In light of the deference given to the credibility determinations of NLRB administrative law judges, an NLRB attorney would ordinarily confront a dilemma in the situation created, or exacerbated, by Hoffman. On the one hand, immigration facts could be ignored on the theory that they are not germane to the question of whether a discriminatee is a statutory employee. On the other hand, immigration facts could be assessed and explored on the theory that an adversary could use the facts to impeach the credibility of a discriminatee, or of any other witness who is an unauthorized worker. Impeachment could take several forms. The NLRB's witnesses might be confronted with facts concerning immigration status, false claims of citizenship, misrepresentation of identity, or forged or unlawfully obtained documents.

In one sense, the NLRB has solved the trial attorney's dilemma by fiat, for it has taken the position that immigration matters are "irrelevant" to the question of NLRA violations—the discriminatee or witness is a statutory employee and that settles the matter. In other words, the NLRB as an institution presumes that immigration questions are relevant solely to the question of employee status. However, if the purpose of such questioning is to impeach credibility, the fact that the evidence does not undermine the employee status of a discriminatee is itself irrelevant. Assuming the aim of the employer's counsel is to impeach the overall credibility of an unauthorized worker-witness, it is likely that a judge would permit questioning on immigration matters within standard evidentiary parameters.

Assuming the NLRB trial attorney called the witness to present testimony that was important, the impeachment of the witness' credibility by exploration of immigration circumstances is extremely problematic. Indeed, given the fetters placed on the pre-trial investigation, the NLRB attorney would be completely unprepared if adverse immigration evidence should surface.

163. See Hoffman Memorandum, supra note 32, at 2-3, § B.
164. See Fed. R. Evid. 608(b):

Specific instances of the conduct of a witness, for the purpose of attacking or supporting the witness' character for truthfulness, other than conviction of crime as provided in rule 609, may not be proved by extrinsic evidence. They may, however, in the discretion of the court, if probative of truthfulness or untruthfulness, be inquired into on cross-examination of the witness (1) concerning the witness' character for truthfulness or untruthfulness, or (2) concerning the character for truthfulness or untruthfulness of another witness as to which character the witness being cross-examined has testified. The giving of testimony, whether by an accused or by any other witness, does not operate as a waiver of the accused's or the witness' privilege against self-incrimination when examined with respect to matters that relate only to character for truthfulness.

However, because Federal administrative law judges are generally not required to follow the rule, see infra note 235 and accompanying text, there is increased likelihood of witness examination on arguably collateral issues.
C. Double D

Credibility complexities in the context of NLRB cases containing immigration issues are illustrated by *In re Double D. Construction Group, Inc.* In this case Iron Workers Local 272 sought to represent a unit of workers employed by Double D, a construction company engaged in the work of reinforcing concrete buildings and structures throughout southern Florida. The particular employees the union wanted to represent were ironworkers who placed reinforcing steel bars, commonly known as “rebar,” in concrete structures. A representation election was initially scheduled for October 19, 2001. The union filed objections to the election because of coercive conduct it claimed the employer had committed, and the union and employer agreed to a second election without additional litigation, which was ultimately held on December 7, 2001. The union lost that election but filed objections to its conduct, which were consolidated with an unfair labor practice allegation for hearing.

At trial, the administrative law judge found the employer had committed a number of unfair labor practices and had interfered with the conduct of the second election. For purposes of this discussion, the judge’s finding with respect to a discharged employee, Tomas Sanchez, is most salient. Sanchez testified that on November 13, 2001, he accompanied the union president to a federal building, where the NLRB offices were located, to facilitate the discussion of a voluntarily rerun second election. An important credibility dispute arose as to whether the employer’s principal, Lock, saw Sanchez in the building. This was important because in order for the NLRB to establish that Sanchez was discharged for engaging in protected activity, as it had alleged, it first had to establish that the em-

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167. Among the NLRB’s statutory duties is the conducting of representation elections when thirty per cent of an employer’s employees in a unit appropriate for collective bargaining demonstrate an interest in representation by a bargaining representative. See 29 U.S.C. § 159(e).
169. See NLRB CASEHANDLING MANUAL (Part Two) §§ 11390-97.
171. Id. at 321. The final tally was four votes for union representation, ten against union representation, and two disputed ballots that were not considered because resolution of the underlying disputes would not have altered the result of the election. Id. at 321.
172. Unfair labor practices are detailed in 29 U.S.C. § 158. Those practices are, in essence, conduct violating 29 U.S.C. § 157 (“Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection, and shall also have the right to refrain from any or all of such activities . . . .”).
174. Id. at 324.
175. Id. at 324-25. Sanchez alleged that Lock saw him in a coffee shop in the lobby of the Federal building.
Employer had knowledge\textsuperscript{176} that Sanchez was engaged in protected activity.\textsuperscript{177} Sanchez unequivocally asserted that Lock saw him in the building.\textsuperscript{178} The union official could not remember if he saw Lock in the building, but only "believed" he did.\textsuperscript{179} Lock could not recall if he had seen Sanchez in the building.\textsuperscript{180} Thus, Sanchez' testimony was the reed upon which the NLRB's prima facie case was perched. Three days after the second election, Sanchez reported to work and, according to his testimony, Lock discharged him.\textsuperscript{181} According to Lock's testimony, Sanchez simply abandoned his job following the election.\textsuperscript{182} The administrative law judge refused to credit Sanchez' testimony on either issue:

\begin{quote}
[T]here are reasons to doubt Sanchez' testimony . . . He . . . admitted that when he applied for work with [the employer] he used a false social security number. Although asked, he did not say where he obtained this number, but only admitted that it was false. There are certain similarities between using a false social security number and giving untrue testimony. Both obviously involve the element of falsehood, but more than that, they both entail a substantial legal risk. The punishment for using a false social security number is quite significant, and so is the penalty for perjury. Sanchez used a false social security number to obtain employment. To obtain work, he was willing to risk the legal penalty. The complaint names Sanchez as a discriminatee, and the Government seeks an order requiring Respondent to reinstate him with backpay. A job is at stake once more. If Sanchez demonstrated a willingness to use a false Government document to obtain work, notwithstanding the risk, he may also be willing to offer false testimony to obtain reinstatement, notwithstanding the risk. To the extent that Sanchez' testimony conflicts with that of Lock, I credit Lock.\textsuperscript{183}
\end{quote}

Thus, the administrative law judge dismissed the complaint allegation that Sanchez's discharge violated the NLRA.\textsuperscript{184} The General Counsel filed ex-

\textsuperscript{176.} The employer almost certainly had knowledge that someone was involved in union activity, and it might be argued that this should be enough to satisfy the NLRB's burden on this element of proving that the discharge was unlawful. In recent years, however, the NLRB has squeamishly insisted on particularized evidence of knowledge. See Sacramento Recycling, 345 N.L.R.B. 564, 565 (2005). In other words, the NLRB insists that it be proven that the employer knew that an individual discriminatee was involved in protected activity to make out a prima facie case of discrimination with respect to that discriminatee, even in a small workplace in which a realistic understanding of workplace dynamics should easily support an inference of knowledge in connection with any employee discharged during an organizing drive in suspicious circumstances.

\textsuperscript{177.} See Benjamin Franklin Plumbing, 352 N.L.R.B. No. 71 (2008) (under Wright Line standard NLRB meets its initial burden by showing that the employee was engaged in protected activity; that the employer was aware of the activity; and that the activity was a substantial or motivating reason for the employer's action).

\textsuperscript{178.} Double D, 339 N.L.R.B. at 324.

\textsuperscript{179.} Id. at 325.

\textsuperscript{180.} Id.

\textsuperscript{181.} Id.

\textsuperscript{182.} Id. The distinction is critical because an "adverse action" must be proven as part of the NLRB's prima facie case. See United Rentals, Inc., 350 N.L.R.B. No. 76, slip op. at 1 (2007).

\textsuperscript{183.} Double D, 339 N.L.R.B. at 325.

\textsuperscript{184.} Id.
ceptions, and a two-member plurality of a three-member NLRB panel remanded the administrative law judge's discharge finding to "reevaluate the conflicting testimony of Sanchez and Lock, basing his choice between their accounts on appropriate considerations in determining credibility." For the plurality, comprised of Board members Liebman and Acosta:

[T]he judge effectively disqualified Sanchez as a witness, as opposed to making a true credibility determination, which considers the witness' testimony in context, including, among other things, his demeanor, the weight of the respective evidence, established or admitted facts, inherent probabilities, and reasonable inferences drawn from the record as a whole. The plurality did not suggest that the administrative law judge was prevented from taking cognizance of the false representation made on Form I-9. However, it held that the judge impermissibly discredited Sanchez's testimony at trial by focusing solely on the false representation.

Dissenting Board Member Schaumber had a very different view of the matter:

I believe the rule the majority adopts, while well intentioned, threatens to lower the bar on the degree of truth and honesty to be expected in Board proceedings. After all, why should the rule be limited to the falsification of an Immigration and Naturalization Service Form I-9 and not be applied to additional documentation provided during the course of employment? Why should the majority's decision be limited to undocumented aliens that are the focus of its decision and not be expanded to others who have compelling personal reasons to lie to get a job?

On remand the same administrative law judge again discredited Sanchez' testimony, albeit on expanded grounds. However, with respect to the general propriety of utilizing the fact of a falsified immigration document as part of an assessment of credibility, the judge was undeterred:

Sanchez damaged his credibility not by failing to obtain a valid social security number but by lying about it on a government form. The difference in these two acts is as stark as the contrast between malum prohibitum and malum in se. Neither the Ten Commandments nor the Code of Hammurabi nor the Confucian Analects condemns working without a valid social security number and, in any event, doing so says nothing about propensity to answer questions truthfully. On the other hand, lying is lying, and has been since the dawn of human civilization.

Under Standard Dry Wall, the judge's credibility finding should probably have been upheld because the clear preponderance of all the relevant evidence should not have convinced a plurality of the NLRB that the judge's

185. Id. at 306.
186. Id. at 305.
187. Id.
188. Id. at 309.
190. Id. at 916 (emphasis in the original).
decision was incorrect.\textsuperscript{191} As the administrative law judge demonstrated in his decision on remand, there were alternative bases in the record evidence to discredit Sanchez.\textsuperscript{192} The plurality obviously knew \textit{Standard Dry Wall} well and yet failed in reality to apply it in the case.

\textbf{D. The Asylum Law Analogy: The Heart of the Claim}

The essential credibility paradox arising from \textit{Hoffman}'s approval of NLRA employee status for unauthorized workers has a parallel in asylum law. Whether an immigrant has left his or her native country to escape political violence and persecution or to escape severe economic hardship by obtaining a job, litigation in both the asylum and labor contexts may jeopardize that escape. It is hard to imagine that the facts surrounding such an escape would not be desperate. Desperate people have been known to do desperate things, including misrepresenting facts relating to immigration and to citizenship status.\textsuperscript{193} The development of credibility law in asylum contexts provides useful lessons for the NLRB.

Asylum law, like labor law, is steeped in difficult fact questions turning on credibility. An asylum applicant begins with a formal application to the Attorney General for protection.\textsuperscript{194} The applicant must demonstrate in an interview with an asylum officer that the applicant is a refugee, has been persecuted in the country of the applicant's nationality, and has a well-founded fear of future persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.\textsuperscript{195} If the asylum application is denied, an immigration judge hears the applicant's case and assesses the credibility of their testimony, taking into account any corroborating evidence.\textsuperscript{196} Before rendering a decision, the judge must make an explicit credibility finding.\textsuperscript{197} If the judge makes an adverse credibility finding, or finds a lack of corroborating evidence, the asylum application is denied again.\textsuperscript{198} The applicant may appeal the denial to the Board of Immi-

\textsuperscript{191} See supra note 158.
\textsuperscript{192} 342 N.L.R.B. at 912-16.
\textsuperscript{193} Indeed, in Double D the NLRB cited Beltran-Tirado v. INS, 213 F.3d 1179 (9th Cir. 2000), a case standing for the proposition that an unauthorized worker falsifying immigration documents was not guilty of a crime of "moral turpitude" within the meaning of immigration regulations. 339 N.L.R.B. at 305, n.17. The citation was curious because, as noted by the dissent, \textit{id.} at 317-18, and the administrative law judge on remand, 342 N.L.R.B. at 916-17, the case had no apparent application to Double D. The judge may have suspected that the case was cited to chide that unauthorized workers were not "immoral."
\textsuperscript{195} \textit{id.} (citing \textit{IMMIGRATION LAW & PROCEDURE}, \textsection 33.05 [3][b][i]).
\textsuperscript{196} \textit{id.} (citing \textit{IMMIGRATION LAW & PROCEDURE}, \textsection 1.03[5][d]).
\textsuperscript{197} \textit{id.} (citing \textit{IMMIGRATION LAW & PROCEDURE}, \textsection 34.02 [9][b]).
\textsuperscript{198} \textit{id.}
Credibility determinations are central to these procedures.

Asylum cases present similar problems of how to evaluate testimonial credibility in the context of immigration. In *Turcios v. INS*, for example, immigrant Hugo Turcios applied for asylum and attempted to avoid deportation. At hearing, Turcios testified that he had been arrested, detained, and beaten by armed officers of the El Salvadoran National Police, apparently because of his political affiliations. After two months of near-lethal capture, Turcios was released at the Guatemalan border, possibly because his detention had become public knowledge and was so obviously unlawful under Salvadoran law. Following his release, Turcios reentered El Salvador at a border location he believed to be safe. After remaining in El Salvador for roughly six months, he again left the country because he feared imprisonment and death.

On cross-examination at the immigration hearing, Turcios stated that he had received a passport and an El Salvadoran identification card shortly before he fled El Salvador. He traveled through Guatemala and Mexico and entered the United States without inspection. Thereafter, Turcios worked in the United States as a bus boy, gardener, painter, and construction worker. While engaged in that work, Immigration and Naturalization Service officials arrested him three times, and he falsely told them that he was Mexican so that he could avoid being sent back to El Salvador. When asked why he never sought a legal visa to enter the United States, Turcios stated it had not occurred to him. The immigration judge found that Turcios “did not establish his credibility due to his evasiveness in answering questions.” The judge additionally based his adverse credibility finding on Turcios’s admission that he lied about his citizenship to United States authorities and on Turcios’s “repeated violations of the Immigration Laws.”

The Ninth Circuit reversed the judge’s credibility finding, while also disagreeing with the judge about conclusions to be drawn from testimony that was arguably not credible. On the issue of credibility, the court, in

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199. *Id.* (citing *Immigration Law & Procedure*, § 34.02 [12][g]).
200. 821 F.2d. 1396 (9th Cir. 1987).
201. *Id.* at 1399.
202. *Id.*
203. *Id.* at 1400.
204. *Id.*
205. *Id.*
206. *Id.*
207. *Id.*
208. *Id.*
209. *Id.*
210. *Id.*
211. *Id.*
partial reliance on an opinion of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, stated:

Untrue statements by themselves are not reason for refusal of refugee status and it is the examiner's responsibility to evaluate such statements in the light of all the circumstances of the case... Turcios's misrepresentations are wholly consistent with his testimony and application for asylum: he did so because he feared deportation to El Salvador. In this context, Turcios's statement to the INS does not detract from but supports his claim of fear of persecution. It does not support a negative credibility finding.

The Ninth Circuit further elucidated this nuanced view of credibility in Ceballos-Castillo v. INS, even as it rejected its application to the facts of that case. Responding to the argument that the immigration judge's credibility evaluation had been inadequate, the court said "We understand but reject the argument. Unlike Turcios, the misstatements here were not incidental. They involved the heart of the asylum claim."21

The federal circuits generally came to accept the proposition that adverse credibility determinations should not be based on "minor inconsistencies that do not go to the 'heart of the asylum claim,'" a position that comes close to holding that credibility determinations should never be based on irrelevant testimony. That proposition may sweep too broadly, however. The fact of being a serial liar outside of court—assuming it could be established—would surely bear some relationship to the truth of testimony offered in court, even if those lies were unrelated, or only vaguely related, to the controversy under consideration.

Congress passed the Real ID Act in 2005. Among other things, it revised the standard for credibility determinations in asylum cases in explicit reaction to Ninth Circuit jurisprudence. The legislation expressly authorizes immigration judges to discredit witnesses based on testimonial

...
EMBRACING PARADOX

inconsistencies that are arguably relevant but do not go to the "heart of the claim."\textsuperscript{221}

The credibility issues being played out in the Ninth Circuit cases revolve around two essential questions. First, when are inconsistencies arguably relevant? Second, is there a point at which the extent of testimonial inconsistency will change the nature of irrelevant testimony? These difficult questions are best assessed by hewing closely to the law of evidence.

\textbf{E. Why Rule 608(b) Does not Solve the Problem}

\textit{Double D} and \textit{Turcios} can be read as disagreements between trial judges and appellate bodies about the degree of inconsistency that must be present before testimony, as a matter of law, may be deemed not credible. This resolves to the question of how much falsity must be uttered before all confidence in a witness's testimony is lost. However, the cases can also be read as profound disagreements between judges and appellate bodies about the nature of falsity. Federal Rule of Evidence 608(b),\textsuperscript{222} the vehicle through which testimony "probative of truthfulness or untruthfulness” should properly be before a federal judge,\textsuperscript{223} suggests an analytical referent for this disagreement. The rule allows that specific instances of conduct can be used to attack a witness’ "character for truthfulness” at the discretion of the court if “probative of truthfulness or untruthfulness.”\textsuperscript{224} In essence the rule states that specific instances of conduct can be “inquired into” to attack credibility if they are probative of credibility. In other words, the prior bad acts of a witness—such as making misrepresentations on an immigration form or lying on a job application—may be explored if they tend to show that the witness is not generally believable. The formula begs the question: what is probative of credibility? In the end, what bad act will be sufficient, as a matter of law, to demonstrate that a witness is not generally believable?

In \textit{Double D} the plurality clearly thought that the misrepresentation on the immigration form at issue was, alone, not probative of credibility:

\textsuperscript{221} See supra note 215 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{222} Fed. R. Evid. 608(b) states:

Specific instances of the conduct of a witness, for the purpose of attacking or supporting the witness' character for truthfulness, other than conviction of crime as provided in rule 609, may not be proved by extrinsic evidence. They may, however, in the discretion of the court, if probative of truthfulness or untruthfulness, be inquired into on cross-examination of the witness (1) concerning the witness' character for truthfulness or untruthfulness, or (2) concerning the character for truthfulness or untruthfulness of another witness as to which character the witness being cross-examined has testified.

The giving of testimony, whether by an accused or by any other witness, does not operate as a waiver of the accused's or the witness' privilege against self-incrimination when examined with respect to matters that relate only to character for truthfulness.
\textsuperscript{223} See id.
\textsuperscript{224} Id.
With respect to the incentives for truth-telling, filling out a government immigration form in the workplace—even one that recites the criminal penalties for false statements in the event the signer’s false statement is detected and leads to a conviction—is not the same as testifying under oath in a legal proceeding. This may be particularly true with respect to immigrants who face compelling pressure to find work and earn a livelihood. Although the plurality insisted that it assigned the misrepresentation some probative value, it is more realistic to read the case as an instance in which the plurality (i) believed that the judge had assigned the immigration misrepresentation dispositive weight, and (ii) rejected that the misrepresentation was qualitatively probative of credibility. The answer of dissenting Board member Schaumber reveals his fundamental disagreement:

Considerations to be taken into account in determining the credibility of a witness do not turn on the employee’s status as an illegal alien, any more than the employee’s nationality, country of origin or sex. The rules of evidence call on triers of fact, whether judge or jury, to weigh and consider many factors in determining a witness’s credibility. No one class of employees, or employers for that matter, ha[s] a necessary monopoly on any of them. Compelling pressure to find work and earn a living can be a mitigating factor for an employee whose testimony is impeached because he or she lied in order to get a job; it is not a factor reserved for the illegal alien community.

Although couched in terms of immigration misrepresentation being one of many factors a judge might consider in making a credibility determination, the argument is in reality an answer to the plurality’s tacit assumption that the judge had discredited employee Sanchez solely because of such a misrepresentation.

Rule 608(b) cannot resolve disagreements of this type because extrinsic policy differences will influence any assessment of when testimonial inconsistency or misrepresentation reflects on a witness’s character for truthfulness or untruthfulness. While this Article argues that the NLRB should as a policy matter not discredit witnesses like Sanchez, any position taken on this question would necessarily center on policy and could not persuasively appeal to Rule 608(b).

F. Two Ways Out: Presumption of Credibility and the Fifth Amendment

Rather than helplessly accepting the risk of adverse credibility determinations that eviscerate the prosecutions involving unauthorized workers that Hoffman authorized, policy makers could employ less threatening ap-
proaches to administrative law judges than the puzzling disregard of Standard Dry Wall credibility determinations. An evidentiary rule could be developed creating a rebuttable presumption that an employee admitting to unauthorized worker status in an NLRB proceeding is generally telling the truth in other areas of testimony. This counterintuitive notion recognizes the stark reality of the situation. An unauthorized discriminatee is not eligible for backpay or reinstatement and is exposed to the risk of disclosure to immigration authorities with resulting criminal liability or deportation. Such a witness has no apparent incentive to lie. The NLRB, steeped in industrial reality, understands this kind of witness vulnerability and has established what is, in practical operation, a credibility presumption in favor of employees testifying against the interests of their present employers during NLRB proceedings.

A second policy approach would be to permit discriminatees and witnesses to invoke their Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination without risking the drawing of an adverse inference from a judge in response to the invocation. Such a rule may be at odds with the present NLRB rule permitting the drawing of an adverse inference upon a witness' invocation of the Fifth Amendment. At first blush it might be thought

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228. The Roman maxim "Falsus in Uno, Falsus in Omnibus" refers to the discretion of a judge to reject the entirety of a witness' testimony based upon a single misrepresentation. It generally still is held that a judge has the prerogative to discredit a witness in this manner, though the rule is not free from doubt. See 98 C.J.S. Witnesses § 570.

229. In order for policy makers to effectively consider alternative approaches, the NLRB must painstakingly develop a factual record of the industrial circumstances of a variety of immigration-impacted workplaces in a manner that its Hoffman Memorandum procedures would not allow.

230. Whether the risk is real or imaginary seems unimportant.


232. See Mitchell v. U.S., 526 U.S. 314, 315 (1999) (finding that normal rule in criminal case permits no negative inference from a defendant's failure to testify); see also Baxter v. Palmigiano, 425 U.S. 308, 316 (1976) (citing Lefkowitz v. Turley, 414 U.S. 70, 77 (1973)) (explaining that Fifth Amendment also privileges defendant not to answer official questions in any proceeding where the answers might be criminally incriminating). But see Baxter, 425 U.S. at 318 (holding that in a clearly civil case an adverse inference may be drawn from the invocation of Fifth Amendment privilege even where the privilege is validly invoked). The case law almost universally speaks to whether adverse inferences on invocation of the privilege are constitutionally permissible. There is little or no suggestion in the doctrine that a legislative body would be prevented from forbidding the drawing of an adverse inference upon witness invocation of constitutional privilege in civil cases and, indeed, such an expedient appears permissible. See VA. CODE ANN. § 8.01-223.1 (2008); Travis v. Finley, 548 S.E.2d 906, 912 (Va. Ct. App. 2001) (acknowledging that under Virginia Code no adverse inference may be drawn for asserting constitutional claim in civil case).

233. See NLRB, Division of Judges, Bench Book 13 § 291, (citing In Re Maurice, 73 F.3d 124, 126 (7th Cir. 1995)) (drawing of adverse inference upon invocation of Fifth Amendment privilege in civil cases is permissible). There is scant NLRB decisional law on the point, and what law exists fails to demonstrate the ALJs' recognition of the rule. Monfort of Colorado, Inc., 256 N.L.R.B. 612, 622-23 (1981) (finding by ALJ that adverse inference improperly drawn); id. at 612, 614 n.2 (affirming ALJ's
that the present rule would be distinguishable from an unauthorized worker's invocation of the privilege. Witness silence in the context of civil proceedings touching on immigration status and the possibility, at least in theory, of deportation or criminal conviction, seems more akin to criminal or quasi-criminal proceedings, where adverse inferences by a fact finder for the invocation of the privilege are forbidden. However, the Supreme Court rejected that theory decades ago in the context of deportation hearings, where it would appear most persuasive, so it appears the NLRB would have to modify its present interpretive rule.

An explicit statutory impediment to modification of the interpretive rule does not exist. In matters of evidence the NLRA simply requires that the NLRB follow the Federal Rules of Evidence "so far as practicable." Thus, if a direction by the NLRB to its judges either to presume the credibility of immigration-vulnerable witnesses or to forbid the drawing of an adverse inference from witnesses' invocation of Fifth Amendment privilege is in conflict with the Federal Rules of Evidence, the NLRB's enabling statute does not forbid the departure. The Administrative Procedure Act, moreover, confers administrative agencies functioning in an adjudicative capacity with extremely broad control over the creation and enforcement of evidentiary rules.

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234. U.S. ex rel. Bilokumsky v. Tod, 263 U.S. 149, 154 (1923) ("[T]here is no rule of law which prohibits officers charged with the administration of the immigration law from drawing an inference from the silence of one who is called upon to speak").

235. 29 U.S.C. § 160(b); NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD, RULES AND REGULATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF PROCEDURE § 102.39.

236. A "direction" could take the form of formal adjudication, informal rulemaking, or promulgation of a nonlegislative rule. The NLRB could also simply reverse credibility determinations of administrative law judges on an ad hoc basis upon exception by an aggrieved party because, under the Administrative Procedure Act, the NLRB on appeal retains authority to decide cases with "all the powers which it would have in making the initial decision . . . ." 5 U.S.C. § 557(b). Reversal of ALJ credibility determinations will subject the NLRB to the risk that reviewing courts will conclude the reversals are based on demeanor rather than policy. See Harold J. Krent & Lindsay DuVall, Accommodating ALJ Decision Making Independence with Institutional Interests of the Administrative Judiciary, 25 J. Nat'l Ass'n. Admin. L. Judges 1, 31-32 (2005) (discussing Penasquitos Village, Inc. v. NLRB, 565 F.2d 1074 (9th Cir. 1977)).

237. The NLRB might successfully argue that, assuming a witness' silence is evidence supporting an adverse credibility determination, in the context of immigration-related examinations or testimony, the probative value of any evidence likely to be adduced is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice. See FED. R. EVID. 403; Cunningham-Paramter, supra note 23, at 67-68.

238. See 5 U.S.C § 556(d) (stating only that "a party is entitled to present his case or defense by oral or documentary evidence, to submit rebuttal evidence, and to conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full and true disclosure of the facts").
Nevertheless, the fact that the NLRB would not be prohibited from enacting modified evidentiary rules—whether through APA informal rulemaking procedures or formal adjudication\footnote{Rulemaking involves the promulgation of regulations that establish guidelines to apply to particular people or practices. Under the Administrative Procedure Act the term "rulemaking" refers to informal notice and comment rulemaking. Section 553 of the APA requires a general notice of proposed rulemaking to be published in the Federal Register, including a statement of the time, place, and nature of public rulemaking procedures, and a reference to the legal authority under which the rule is proposed; and the terms or substance of the proposed rule or a description of the subjects and issues involved. After giving notice in the Federal Register, the agency must give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rulemaking, usually through submission of written data, views, or arguments. By statute, Congress provided the NLRB both rulemaking and adjudication powers, see 29 U.S.C. §§ 156, 160, but the NLRB has chosen to enforce the NLRA's substantive laws almost entirely through the adjudication process.}—does not mean it should make the attempt to do so unless it is absolutely clear that a legislative solution is unlikely in the foreseeable future. This is true for two reasons. First, the NLRB’s utilization of Administrative Procedure Act informal rulemaking has always been controversial\footnote{Scott A. Zebrak, The Future of NLRB Rulemaking: Analyzing the Mixed Signals Sent by the Implementation of the Health Care Bargaining Unit Rule and by the Proposed Beck Union Dues Regulation, 8 ADMIN. L.J. AM. U. 125, 158-59 (1994) (concluding that proper timing for policy development is crucial for successful rulemaking).} despite its unambiguous authorization under the NLRA.\footnote{See supra notes 218-221 and accompanying text.} Second, the rulemaking process might attract significant attention and provoke a Congressional response similar to the Real ID Act’s intervention in Ninth Circuit asylum law.\footnote{Arthur N. Read, Protecting Worker Rights in the Context of Immigration Reform, 9 J.L. & SOC. CHANGE 65, 73 n.13 (2006) (noting that “[t]he Hoffman decision has not resulted in the passage of legislation that would overcome its effects . . . ”).}

The best solution to the underlying evidentiary problem—the potential for categorical discrediting of witnesses by virtue of their unauthorized status or facts commonly attendant to that status—is for Congress to address the issue through modified evidentiary rules of the type this Article has proposed. This is not as implausible as it might at first appear. While efforts to nullify Hoffman have failed,\footnote{See supra note 239.} modified evidentiary rules are necessary to preserve even the limited regime of rights and status that Hoffman authorized. Given the vocal criticism of Hoffman’s denial of remedies to the individual unauthorized workers who are the victims of discrimination, Congress might consider minor evidentiary modifications to be a relatively painless compromise. A perception of the proposals as banal could help them avoid the now reflexive rejection of any beneficent immigration reform.

In any event Congress or the NLRB must act, for failure to ensure a realistic evidentiary regime in immigration-related NLRB cases will erode and then annihilate the possibility of prosecution of cases involving unauthorized workers. The outcome of Double D, for all its subtlety and innu-
endo, was Tomas Sanchez' discrediting. Once unauthorized workers realize that, despite the risk of their involvement in NLRB cases, judges are likely to simply discredit them whenever difficult credibility disputes arise, they will have little incentive to come forward. At such a juncture, unless the NLRB is to abandon this class of cases altogether, it may have to offer use immunity in conjunction with subpoena to assure the testimony of critical witnesses who are unauthorized workers.

This leaves the question of what the NLRB could do now to address these problems in advance of their arrival at the offices of statutory policy makers, or in the event that policy makers are too "ossified" to act in the near future. One underappreciated possibility is that the NLRB could promulgate interpretive rules establishing presumptions of credibility in favor of witnesses who testify against their interests, and allowing witnesses to avoid adverse inferences upon appropriate invocation of their Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination. Promulgation of rules in this manner would not require contentious notice and comment procedures, as would be the case for informal rulemaking under the Administrative Procedure Act. Although commentators have criticized this kind of approach precisely because of the lack of public input it affords, the

244. 18 U.S.C. § 6002, 6004 (administrative agencies may offer use immunity with the express permission of the attorney general). Although it might be presumed that the Attorney General would refuse to offer the immunity, there is a government-wide policy of interagency cooperation in immigration matters arising in the context of labor disputes. See Cunningham-Parmeter, supra note 23, at 78 (citing IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE, MEMORANDUM: REVISED OPERATIONS INSTRUCTION 287.3a, QUESTIONING PERSONS DURING LABOR DISPUTES (Dec. 20, 1996), available at http://www.nilc.org/immsemployment/emprights/Revised_Op_Inst.pdf (last visited July 22, 2008); see also Christopher Ho & Jennifer C. Chang, Drawing the Line after Hoffman Plastic Compounds, Inc. v. NLRB: Strategies for Protecting Undocumented Workers in the Title VII Context and Beyond, 22 HOFSTRA LAB. & EMP. L.J. 473, 522 n.216 (2005) (discussing immigration enforcement guidelines recommending interagency cooperation during labor disputes at targeted worksites, and suggesting that the guidelines reflect Government disapproval of enforcement actions covertly initiated by employers to intimidate and coerce employee-plaintiffs in order to dispose of them and their claims).


247. Brown v. Walker, 161 U.S. 591, 599 (1896) (noting that, before a witness can invoke the Fifth Amendment’s privilege in any proceeding, “the danger to be apprehended must be real and appreciable . . . not a danger of an imaginary and unsubstantial character . . . .") (quoting Queen v. Boyes, 1 B & S 311, 321 (1861)).

248. See Claire Tuck, Note, Policy Formulation at the NLRB: A Viable Alternative to Notice and Comment Rulemaking, 27 CARDOZO L. REV. 1117 (2005) (contending that the NLRB should issue interpretive statements on controversial issues so that interested parties can have some basis to structure their conduct in the midst of volatile policy shifts).

249. Id. at 1131; 5 U.S.C. § 553(b)(3)(A). It is also possible that such a rule would be exempt from APA Notice and Comment process as a rule of agency procedure under § 553(b)(3)(A).

250. See, e.g., Robert A. Anthony, Interpretive Rules, Policy Statements, Guidances, Manuals, and the Like—Should Federal Agencies Use Them to Bind the Public?, 41 DUKE L.J. 1311, 1317 (1992) (“Where an agency can nonlegislatively impose standards and obligations that as a practical matter are mandatory, it . . . escapes the delay and the challenge of allowing public participation in the development of its rule”).
NLRB is responsible for utilizing "administrative flexibility within appropriate statutory limitations obtained to accomplish the dominant purpose of the legislation . . . [T]hat purpose is the right of employees to organize for mutual aid without employer interference. This is the principle of labor relations which the [NLRB] is to foster." Given the well-acknowledged political reification of the NLRA statutory environment, the cautious use of interpretive rules may be one of the few ways for the NLRB to attempt flexible solutions to dynamic problems. In addition to providing guidance to parties before the NLRB, the use of interpretive rules would also aid administrative law judges in the murky business of making credibility determinations that are inescapably intertwined with broader immigration policy.

A second recommendation is for the NLRB to abandon the administrative policy of deliberately avoiding immigration facts by abrogating and rewriting the Hoffman Memorandum. The Memorandum must grapple much more realistically with the possibility that immigration evidence will surface during NLRB proceedings. It is only through the acknowledgement of this possibility that more sophisticated investigative and trial tactics are likely to develop.

Despite what has been said above about the general inefficacy of Federal Rule of Evidence 608(b) in resolving these credibility issues, a third recommendation is for NLRB trial attorneys to fully explore Federal Rule of Evidence 608(b) to develop a coherent theory that immigration misrepresentations do not speak to a witness' "character for truthfulness or truthfulness." This exploration will require NLRB attorneys to know much more about the basic immigration facts underlying their cases. For example, an attorney may learn that a worker entered the country unlawfully and misrepresented his identity because he was slowly starving to death and there was simply no other work to be had. While some judges may hold to the view that "a lie is a lie," it makes good tactical sense for NLRB attorneys to know about facts that permit formulation of arguments that may persuade other judges that past misrepresentations do not, in fact, speak to a witness' character for untruthfulness.

Finally, even if the NLRB continues to follow its present procedures, trial attorneys can better prepare witnesses who are unauthorized workers by carefully advising them that nothing regarding the details of their immigration status, or facts surrounding the status, need be revealed spontaneously during the merits phase of an NLRB trial. Witnesses should also be cautioned that they should immediately cease testifying when an NLRB at-

252. Krent & DuVall, supra note 236, at 30 ("Most courts have agreed with the agencies that ALJs have no discretion to reject interpretive rules or policy statements").
253. See Fed. R. Evid. 608(b), supra note 222.
torney has objected to an immigration-related question until the administrative judge has ruled on the objection.

V. STRUCTURAL PARADOX

The third problem generated by *Hoffman* arises from underdeterrence. Employers presently have absolutely no disincentive under the NLRA to discharge unauthorized workers. While this problem is most immediately experienced by the individual victims of discrimination, there are less obvious structural consequences that the NLRB must confront.

A. Standard Model of Structural Integrity

Given the problems inherent in cases involving unauthorized workers, it seems unlikely that prosecutorial policy makers would exhibit zeal in pursuing the cases if the fruit of those efforts are fragile, unstable bargaining units. The NLRB’s overarching policy of industrial stability would be ill-served by the certification of collective bargaining units containing significant numbers of unauthorized workers, if those units could be easily nullified by the strategic discharge of unauthorized workers who support the union. The NLRA confers bargaining rights only upon labor organizations able to garner the support of a majority of employees in an appropriate


255. 29 U.S.C. § 159(b) (directing that the NLRB is to decide in each case the appropriate unit assuring employees fullest freedom in exercising NLRA rights and defining unit possibilities as “employer unit, craft unit, plant unit, or subdivision thereof. . . .”). The NLRB initially examines the unit—or grouping of employees in an individual workplace—that the union wants to represent. If appropriate, the inquiry ends. If inappropriate, the NLRB may examine alternative proposed units, or may reject alternative proposals and unilaterally select the unit it deems appropriate. See State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co. v. NLRB, 411 F.2d 356 (7th Cir. 1969); see also Shares, Inc., v. NLRB, 433 F.3d 939, 944 (7th Cir. 2007) (reaffirming that selection of appropriate bargaining unit is for NLRB and is rarely to be disturbed). Despite the NLRB’s broad latitude in determining bargaining units, however, the agency continues to view industrial stability as a “primary objective of the Wagner Act, and to an even greater extent, the Taft-Hartley Act.” Levitz Furniture Co., 333 N.L.R.B. 717, 723 (2001).

256. This is not to suggest that the discharges of particular employees would immediately extinguish a bargaining unit. Rather, selective discharges of union supporters would destroy the union’s majority status in bargaining unit classifications. After a union’s majority status has been destroyed, an employer is in a position to withdraw recognition from the union. *Levitz Furniture*, 333 N.L.R.B. at 717 (holding that “an employer may rebut the continuing presumption of an incumbent union’s majority status, and unilaterally withdraw recognition, only on a showing that the union has, in fact, lost the support of a majority of the employees in the bargaining unit.”). It might be objected that Board law forbids an employer’s withdrawal of recognition when a union’s loss of majority support is attributable to the employer’s unfair labor practices, Pittsburgh & New England Trucking Co., 249 NLRB 833, 836 (1980). However, once those unfair labor practices have been remedied, the union’s loss of majority support will not have changed because union supporters who were undocumented workers will not have been reinstated. As a practical matter, the bargaining unit will have been destroyed.
ate bargaining unit. Thus, any union failing to achieve and sustain majority employee support in an appropriate bargaining unit, whether of authorized or of unauthorized workers, will simply lack the right under the NLRA to bargain for improvements to working conditions. Unit majority support is the touchstone of the entire NLRA statutory scheme. Assuming that the NLRB certifies a unit comprised of a substantial number of unauthorized workers, the certification may not mean much if union supporters can be fired until the union no longer enjoys majority support.

B. An Employer’s Obligation to Bargain with Unauthorized Workers

While the question of whether unauthorized workers are employees under the NLRA appears resolved, an employer’s obligation to bargain with a unit consisting substantially of such workers was until recently an open question. In Agri Processor, the NLRB firmly imposed such a requirement, and a divided panel of the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the NLRB determination. The facts of the case are fairly straightforward.

The Agri Processor Company was a wholesaler of kosher meat products in Brooklyn, New York. In September 2005, the company’s employees voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers union. When the company refused to bargain, the union filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board. In a subsequent hearing before an administrative law judge, the employer claimed that after the election it processed the Social Security numbers previously given to it by all of the voting employees into the Social Security Administration’s

257. Union support from the majority of an employer’s employees, once formalized, creates a legal obligation for the employer to bargain. See 29 U.S.C. §§ 158(a)(5), 159(a).

258. Employees in most private sector workplaces have the right under 29 U.S.C. § 157 to join and support a non-majority union free from interference by their employer, but the employer has no obligation to bargain with that union. See supra note 257.

259. This is not to suggest that the discharges of particular employees would immediately extinguish a bargaining unit. Rather, selective discharges of union supporters would destroy the union’s majority status in bargaining unit classifications. After a union’s majority status has been destroyed, an employer is in a position to withdraw recognition from the union. Levitz Furniture, 333 N.L.R.B. at 717 (holding that “an employer may rebut the continuing presumption of an incumbent union’s majority status, and unilaterally withdraw recognition, only when the union has, in fact, lost the support of a majority of the employees in the bargaining unit.”). It might be objected that Board law forbids an employer’s withdrawal of recognition when a union’s loss of majority support is attributable to the employer’s unfair labor practices. Pittsburgh & New England Trucking Co., 249 N.L.R.B. 833, 836 (1980). However, once those unfair labor practices have been remedied, the union’s loss of majority support will not have changed because union supporters who were undocumented workers will not have been reinstated. As a practical matter, the bargaining unit will have been destroyed.

260. But see Agri Processor Co. v. NLRB, 514 F.3d 1, 13 (D.C. Cir. 2008) (dissenting opinion) (denying that Hoffman actually decided the question of employee status of unauthorized workers).


262. 514 F.3d at 2.

263. Id.

264. Id.
online database and discovered that "most" of the numbers were either nonexistent or belonged to other people. Based on this development, Agri Processor maintained that most of the workers who had voted in the election were "aliens unauthorized to work in the United States." Agri Processor argued that unauthorized workers were not employees protected by the NLRA and that the NLRB representation election was invalid. The company also argued that a bargaining unit consisting of authorized and unauthorized workers—as the facts eventually showed was the case—was inappropriate.

The administrative law judge hearing the case disagreed with the employer's arguments and found that it had violated the NLRA by refusing to bargain with the union. In a terse footnote, the NLRB upheld the judge and unequivocally found that an employer had an obligation to bargain with a unit comprised substantially of unauthorized workers:

With respect to the separate view of our colleague, we note that, unless and until the employees are declared to be illegal and are discharged and/or deported, they remain employees of the Respondent, they remain employees under the Act, they lawfully voted in the election that the Union won, and since the Union lawfully represents the bargaining unit, we do not think it "peculiar" to require the [employer] to bargain with the Union.

The allusion to peculiarity stemmed from the remarks of concurring NLRB member Peter Kirsanow who observed, later in the same footnote, that:

[A]n order compelling the Respondent to bargain with a union representing employees that the Respondent would be required to discharge under the Immigration Reform and Control Act . . . may reasonably be seen as somewhat peculiar by the average person.

265. There was never a finding in the proceedings as to whether "most" of the employees voting in the election were unauthorized or, for that matter, whether any of them were. At trial, the employer made an offer of proof that a majority of the employees who were employed at the time of the election had submitted to the employer social security cards or other identification; and that upon a post election check at a social security web site, it discovered that these individuals either did not have social security numbers or that the numbers submitted did not match the numbers listed with the Social Security Administration. 347 N.L.R.B. No. 107, slip op. at 4, 2006 WL 2559821 (N.L.R.B). The administrative law judge characterized the employer's claim as an assertion that "a majority of the people who voted in the election 'were subsequently found to be illegal aliens' and therefore that the election should be declared a nullity because (a) the Union never had a valid showing of interest and (b) the illegal aliens, comprising most of the voting unit were not legally permitted to work for the Company." Id. at 3. Member Kirsanow's concurrence argued that the employer possessed "evidence that most of its unit employees presented social security numbers that do not match those in the Social Security Administration's records . . . ." Id. at 2, n.2. The circuit court appeared to accept arguendo that "most" of the bargaining unit consisted of unauthorized workers. 514 F.3d at 2-3. The upshot is that no one really knew, least of all the NLRB. The NLRB has worked very hard not to know the facts in these cases.

266. 514 F.3d at 2-3.
267. Id. at 3.
268. 347 N.L.R.B. No. 107, slip op. at 4-5.
269. Id. at 2, n.2.
270. Id.
Member Kirsanow was not alone in finding the outcome peculiar. Concurring in the D.C. Circuit’s subsequent agreement with the NLRB’s determination that the employer was obligated to bargain with a bargaining unit in which “most” of the employees were unauthorized, Circuit Judge Henderson, echoing Member Kirsanow, opined that the situation was “‘somewhat peculiar’ indeed.” The sense of the peculiarity experienced by these jurists is not articulated beyond an almost casual acknowledgment of the evident conflict between immigration and labor law, which counter-intuitively and simultaneously confer and forbid employee status to unauthorized workers. Leaving to one side, however, the issue of employee status, there are additional peculiarities to consider arising from Hoffman’s denial of a practical discharge remedy.

C. Consequences of an Employer’s Refusal to Bargain with a Union Representing a Bargaining Unit in which “Most” Employees are Unauthorized

Consider the situation of the Agri Processor bargaining unit following the D.C. Circuit’s order to bargain. Imagine that, subsequent to the order, the employer promptly discharged its unauthorized workers, claiming that it was obligated to do so under the IRCA. Imagine that it then hires new employees to replace the discharged employees. It then withdraws recognition from the union because unauthorized workers were a substantial part of the bargaining unit and without them it lost majority support. In

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271. 514 F.3d at 9. Judge Kavanaugh dissented, concluding that the Supreme Court in Hoffman had not specifically dealt with the question of whether the IRCA had rendered unauthorized workers non-employees. Id. at 11-12.

272. The outcome in Agri Processor was driven largely by the case’s procedural posture. The NLRA provides a party to a representation proceeding no opportunity to appeal NLRB representation cases. Am. Fed’n of Labor v. NLRB, 308 U.S. 401, 404 (1940). When, in Agri Processor, the NLRB decided that the unauthorized workers in question were eligible to vote in the representation election, the employer could not challenge that determination in the representation case’s forum. As a result, it did what employers often do in such circumstances; it refused to bargain with the union at all. This is known as a “technical” 8(a)(5) violation, or a “test of certification,” because the employer’s refusal to bargain is undertaken solely to obtain “back door” review of the NLRB’s representation decision, which in this instance was the decision that unauthorized workers were eligible to vote in the NLRB election. The court forum becomes available after the NLRB has, pro forma, found a violation in connection with the refusal to bargain and seeks enforcement of its bargaining order in a circuit court. See Union de La Construccion de Concreto y Equipo Pesado v. NLRB, 10 F.3d 14, 16 (1st Cir. 1993). The only issues before the Agri Processor court were the status of the unauthorized workers as employees under the NLRA, and the inclusion of those workers in a bargaining unit with “authorized” employees, issues squarely within the NLRB’s expertise and discretion. The more difficult problems discussed in this section transpire after the bargaining obligation has been established and it is the continued viability of the union’s representational status that is at issue. That is a legal issue, and the NLRB’s resolution of it is more likely to be questioned by a court.

273. Levitz Furniture, 333 N.L.R.B. at 725 (holding that employer may lawfully withdraw recognition from a union if it proves union has, in fact, lost the support of a majority of bargaining unit employees).
such circumstances the NLRB’s remedial tool kit would be hard pressed to respond.

First, assuming the NLRB found that the discharges were unlawfully motivated, it is far from clear at this point in the law’s development that the employer would not have a perfectly valid affirmative defense for its actions. In other words, it is possible that the employer could simply argue that it discharged the unauthorized workers because they were unauthorized and that even assuming the discharge was also motivated by the workers’ protected activity, the primary immigration-related motive barred the finding of a violation.274 Second, even in the absence of a valid defense, the union’s majority will have been lost, thus compelling the NLRB to argue that the withdrawal of recognition was tainted275 and that the bargaining relationship therefore continued to exist as a matter of law. If the employer did not agree, lengthy litigation would ensue as the NLRB attempted to reimpose the bargaining obligation.

In sufficiently egregious circumstances the NLRB would be authorized to expedite the reestablishment of the bargaining obligation by seeking immediate reinstatement of discharged employees through the injunctive relief afforded by Section 10(j) of the NLRA.276 Since unauthorized workers have no reinstatement rights, however, the most the NLRB could reasonably seek from a federal district court would be a cease and desist order running to the benefit of the bargaining unit, not to the discharged employees. If the NLRB sought such an injunction, it is quite likely that an employer would voluntarily agree to resolve the matter. It would have effectively destroyed the union’s majority and would have no backpay or reinstatement liability to consider. Assuming that the employer was not recidivist,277 the NLRB would be hard pressed to justify injunctive proceedings in a federal court.278 Whether a bargaining order were voluntarily and

274. See supra note 157 and accompanying text. Compare Int’l Baking Co., 348 N.L.R.B. No. 76, slip op. at 6 (2006) (affirming judge’s finding that employer would have discharged employee Zarco for immigration violations notwithstanding the protected activity in which the judge found she engaged) with Concrete Form Walls, 346 N.L.R.B. 831, 834 (2006) (rejecting employer’s affirmative defense that it would have discharged workers who were purportedly unauthorized, in compliance with the IRCA and notwithstanding its anti-union motive, because it failed to prove that they were in fact “illegal aliens”).

275. See NLRB v. Goya Foods, 525 F.3d 1117, 1127 (11th Cir. 2008) (“The record reveals violations of a widespread and serious nature; the pervasive atmosphere of anti-union animus tainted the employees’ discharges, as well as the ultimate withdrawal of recognition”).

276. 29 U.S.C. § 160(j). See Eisenberg ex rel. NLRB v. Wellington Hall Nursing Home, 651 F.2d 902, 907 (3d Cir. 1981) (upholding NLRB’s request for § 10(j) injunction after employer discharged several union supporters despite the existence of a prior court-enforced order requiring that the employer bargain in good faith).

277. See, e.g., J.P. Stevens & Co., 268 N.L.R.B. 33, 35 (1983) (finding charged employer was “the most notorious recidivist in the field of labor law”) (quoting NLRB v. J.P. Stevens & Co., 563 F.2d 8, 13 (1977)).

278. However, if the employer failed to agree to bargain with the union as part of the settlement, it is possible that the NLRB would continue to pursue 10(j) relief. Eisenberg, 651 F.2d at 907-08 (ex-
promptly agreed to at the administrative level, or litigated in a 10(j) court case, it would in either event be a designation for the benefit of future employees, whose union sentiments cannot be known.

In the unlikely event such a case made its way to a 10(j) proceeding, a court's reaction to the situation would be difficult to predict. Various federal circuits articulate standards for granting a 10(j) injunction differently, but the Seventh Circuit's formulation is reasonably representative of the standard the NLRB often finds most difficult to meet. Like all the circuits, the Seventh Circuit holds that "the district court should issue an injunction before the Board has adjudicated a case where such equitable relief is 'just and proper.'" This simply tracks the statutory language. In formulating the definition of when relief is just and proper, however, the Circuit holds that a federal district court should "evaluate the propriety of the Director's request with an eye toward the traditional equitable principles that normally guide such an inquiry."

The circuit has "outlined the four traditional criteria that a party must demonstrate in order to obtain injunctive relief: (1) no adequate remedy at law, (2) irreparable harm absent an injunction that exceeds the harm suffered by the other party as a result of the injunction, (3) a reasonable likelihood of success on the merits, and (4) 'harm to the public interest stemming from the injunction that is tolerable in light of the benefits achieved by the relief.'" This explicit emphasis on traditional equitable criteria is impor-

279. See Hoffman Plastic Compounds, Inc., 535 U.S. at 154 (Breyer, J., dissenting) (citing A.P.R.A. Fuel Buyers Group, Inc., 320 N.L.R.B. 408, 415, n.38 (1995)) ("Without the possibility of the deterrence that backpay provides, the [NLRA] can impose only future-oriented obligations upon law-violating employers—for it has no other weapons in its remedial arsenal.").

280. This assumes that the union had at some point established that it was supported by a majority of employees in the bargaining unit. Courts will not otherwise impose a bargaining order. See, e.g., Conair Corp. v. NLRB, 721 F.2d 1355, 1384 (D.C. Cir. 1983) ("Congress has not placed nonmajority bargaining orders within the NLRB's remedial discretion.").

281. The NLRB has authority upon its issuance of an administrative complaint to petition federal district courts for temporary injunctive relief. A district court has jurisdiction to grant such an injunction if it deems the relief "just and proper." Section 10(j), National Labor Relations Act, as amended. Two interpretations have emerged in the Federal Circuits when attempting to apply this language. One interpretation holds that an injunction is just and proper if it will prevent frustration of the remedial purposes of the Act. The other interpretation utilizes traditional equitable criteria when assessing whether to grant injunctive relief: balancing of hardships, likelihood of success on the merits, irreparable harm, and the public interest. The second, traditional test has proved harder for the NLRB to meet. Richard P. Lapp, A Call for a Simpler Approach: Examining the NLRA's Section 10(j) Standard, 3 U. PA. J. LAB. & EMP. L. 251, 270-71 (2001).


283. Id.

284. Id. at 1567 (citing Pioneer Press, 881 F.2d at 490 n.3).
tant because it requires the NLRB to make a showing and indeed to prevail on the traditional "balance of the harms" question. 285

It is the fourth criterion of this standard—harm to the public interest—that presents a difficult problem for cases involving an employer’s unlawful discharge of unauthorized workers, even if the case arrives at court with no party disputing the discharged workers’ entitlement to the NLRB’s reinstatement and backpay remedy. Typically the NLRB is confronted, under this "just and proper" standard, with a situation in which a sole public interest—enforcement of the NLRA—is balanced against the private interest implicated in contended interference with the operation of an employer’s business. 286 In cases involving unauthorized workers, however, the situation becomes more difficult because the public interest policy supporting collective bargaining is in tension with the public interest represented by congressional immigration policy. 287

This balance of interests problem would probably be amplified if the majority of unauthorized workers were no longer available for employment in the bargaining unit; a court would have difficulty divining the purpose for which it was providing relief, or even understanding the precise nature of the relief sought. There may be an attenuated public interest in demonstrating to future workers of an employer that prior workers of that employer, who were discharged in violation of the NLRA, would have been reinstated but for their unauthorized immigration status. It seems unlikely, however, that a court would find such an interest injunction-worthy. 288

Suppose a second scenario in which Agri Processor, upon receiving "no match" information, 289 simply advised the union that while it recog-

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285. See NLRB v. P*I*E* Nationwide, Inc., 894 F.2d 887, 893 (7th Cir. 1990) ("The principles of equitable jurisprudence are not suspended merely because a government agency is the plaintiff").

286. See, e.g., Bloedorn v. Francisco Foods, Inc., 276 F.3d 270 (7th Cir. 2001) (reversing the district court, the circuit court held in favor of the NLRB, balancing the deprivation to employees from a delay in bargaining and from diminution of union support against the employer’s hardships of employee displacement resulting from reinstatement of discharged employees and mandated bargaining).

287. See Note, Propriety of Section 10(j) Bargaining Orders in Gissel Situations, 82 Mich. L. Rev. 112, 132 (1983): The Supreme Court has outlined the role of equitable components in the criteria for a statutory injunction in Hect Co. v. Bowles, 321 U.S. 321 (1944). The Hect court called upon district courts to act "in accordance with their traditional [equitable] practices, as conditioned by the necessities of the public interest which Congress has sought to protect." Id. at 330. The Court used the term "public interest" to mean the policies that Congress intended the statutory injunction to promote. Id. at 331. Thus, the fact that an injunction is authorized by statute requires the affected court to exercise its equitable discretion "in light of the large objectives of the [statute authorizing the injunction]." Id.

288. But see NLRB v. Intersweet, Inc., 125 F.3d 1064 (7th Cir. 1997) (affirming NLRB’s order, the Seventh Circuit ordered bargaining in a Gissel case, a remedy approved by the courts in which an employer is ordered to bargain with a union that once had employee majority support but was thereafter unable to achieve formal NLRB certification because of the employer’s outrageous or serious unfair labor practices).

289. "Each year, employers submit employee wages to the [Social Security Administration] on Forms W-2—Wage and Tax Statements—and [the Social Security Administration] posts those earnings to its Master Earnings File so that workers receive credit for Social Security benefits. When [the Social
nized it as the exclusive bargaining representative of the bargaining unit, and was willing to bargain in good faith, it would not agree to discuss or bargain over any subject relating to known unauthorized workers because the subject would be illegal, in light of the IRCA's prohibition of employment of any worker "knowing the alien is (or has become) an unauthorized alien with respect to such employment." Such a position would not reject the employee status of unauthorized workers, which was the ineffective position asserted by the employer in Agri Processor, but rather call into question the efficacy of bargaining with the union over unit employees that are unauthorized workers. If the number of unauthorized unit employees were large, as in Agri Processor, the employer would have a substantial argument that bargaining would be pointless because, the argument would go, any resulting agreement would be rife with illegal provisions.

The NLRB is familiar with the courts' reaction to mandated bargaining that cannot bear fruit. The Supreme Court, for example, has stated that employers have an obligation to bargain only over subjects that are "amen-

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290. See Eddy Potash, Inc., 331 N.L.R.B. 552 (2000) (finding that employer violated the NLRA by insisting on a collective bargaining provision illegal under Federal law governing the operation of mines on leased Federal lands); Hill-Rom, Co. v. NLRB, 957 F.2d 454, 457 (7th Cir. 1992) (citing Idaho Statesman v. NLRB, 836 F.2d 1396, 1400 (D.C. Cir. 1988) (defining illegal subjects as those proscribed by federal law, or where appropriately applied, state law)).

291. 8 U.S.C. § 1324a(a)(2); see Aramark Facility Servs. v. Service Employees Intern. Union, Local 1877, 530 F.3d 817, 824-25 (9th Cir. 2008) (holding that, notwithstanding the existence of a collective bargaining agreement requiring reinstatement of bargaining unit employees discharged without cause, public policy "would necessarily be violated if [the employer] knowingly reinstated undocumented workers"). The culmination of the bargaining process under present labor law model is a collective bargaining agreement containing a grievance-arbitration provision. Authority such as Aramark calls into question whether a court would enforce an arbitrator's award in favor of undocumented workers against an employer that was not aware of the immigration status of the grievant. This might in certain workplaces strip the agreement of significant vigor. On the other hand, assuming that a court interpreted sections of the collective bargaining agreement as applied to unauthorized workers, the entire agreement should not be rendered void. NLRB v. Rockaway News Supply Co., 345 U.S. 71, 79 (1953) (opining that "employment contract should not be taken out of the hands of parties merely because they misunderstood the legal limits of their bargain, where the excess may be severed and separately condemned...

292. This argument assumes that "most" of the employees in the bargaining unit, or at least a majority of the employees, are unauthorized. Obviously, if only a small percentage of the employees are unauthorized, the employer's refusal to bargain in connection with the terms and conditions of those employees would not be as significant a factor.

293. The NLRB's deliberate avoidance of immigration facts will seldom inform it of situations in which the employer knows before a union organizing drive that most employees in a bargaining unit are unauthorized, and that an employer's subsequent avoidance of bargaining in reliance on immigration law is, accordingly, not in good faith. Sophisticated counsel will soon realize that employers are in a superior tactical position if they abandon resistance to union organizing in lieu of a bargaining strategy focused on tactical compliance with the IRCA following the union's certification.
ble to the bargaining process." Because an employer has no obligation to bargain over an illegal subject, there is low likelihood that any provision the employer can couch as inuring to the benefit of unauthorized workers could become incorporated in a collective bargaining agreement. A bargaining unit comprised of a majority of unauthorized workers would increase the potential for these tactics, and increase the possibility that some courts would simply refuse to enforce an NLRB bargaining order because of the low likelihood of the parties ever reaching a collective bargaining agreement.

Parsing some additional language from the Supreme Court in Hoffman anticipates another large problem potentially awaiting the NLRB in the courts. The Court found it troubling that the backpay award acted as an inducement for the worker to remain and work in the country unlawfully because an unlawfully discharged, unauthorized worker was required to mitigate backpay losses by seeking and if possible obtaining post-discharge employment. The same could be said of unauthorized workers’ inclusion in union-represented bargaining units whose sole aim is to improve the working conditions of bargaining unit members. While not “condon[ing] and encourag[ing] future violations,” courts might conclude that any benefit flowing from unauthorized workers’ inclusion in a bargaining unit would encourage the workers’ continued unlawful presence in the country and on that theory refuse to order bargaining. This is yet another reason why employers may experience only limited consequences if refusing to

294. First Nat’l Maint. Corp. v. NLRB, 452 U.S. 666, 678 (1981) (holding wholly entrepreneurial subjects not bargainable because “[t]he concept of mandatory bargaining is premised on the belief that collective discussions backed by the parties’ economic weapons will result in decisions that are better for both management and labor and for society as a whole . . . . This will be true, however, only if the subject proposed for discussion is amenable to resolution through the bargaining process”).


296. Of course, the employer could agree to bargain for a collective bargaining agreement that expressly disavowed its applicability to unauthorized workers. Such an agreement would be of little use to a union in a bargaining unit in which the majority of employees are unauthorized workers.

297. But see supra note 291. If the unauthorized worker contingent of the unit is very small the courts may view the matter in a different light. This was probably the situation in NLRB v. Intersweet, Inc., 125 F.3d 1064 (7th Cir. 1997). In that case, decided before Hoffman, the Seventh Circuit ordered bargaining in a unit allegedly consisting of unauthorized workers, eighteen of whom the employer unlawfully discharged. The NLRB ordered backpay and reinstatement of the discharged employees pending final determination of remedial eligibility in the compliance phase. The court noted that the NLRB had estimated that the size of the expanding bargaining unit would reach 150 employees by 1995, two years prior to the decision. The court also noted that the unauthorized status of the discharged employees had not been proven. Similarly, in A.P.R.A. Fuel Buyers, a dispute litigated repeatedly in various procedural postures from 1991 to 1998, and resulting in three bargaining orders enforced by the Second Circuit, N.L.R.B. v. A.P.R.A. Fuel Buyers Group at 28 F.3d 103 (2d Cir. 1994), 134 F.3d 50 (2d Cir. 1997), 159 F.3d 1345 (2d Cir. 1998), the original fact finding established that the two admittedly unauthorized workers at issue, if included in the bargaining unit, "would not affect the Union's majority status." A.P.R.A. Fuel Oil Buyers Group, Inc., 312 N.L.R.B. 471, 474 n.2 (1993); see supra note 56.


299. Id. at 150.
bargain with unions representing bargaining units comprised substantially of unauthorized workers.

D. Possible Responses to Structural Problems

The analysis above leads to the conclusion that bargaining units consisting of a large proportion of unauthorized workers are vulnerable. There are no easy answers regarding how to improve industrial stability in these circumstances. It is evident, however, that the NLRB must make efforts to know much more about the composition of the bargaining units it certifies. The NLRB is so far from making these efforts that the Hoffman Memorandum forbids the introduction of evidence touching on immigration status from its representation hearings.\(^{300}\) Moreover, the Memorandum is silent regarding any attempt to develop immigration evidence during the initial investigation of a representation petition. In the overwhelming majority of representation cases, employers and unions privately agree to bargaining unit details in advance of an NLRB election.\(^{301}\) The agreements are routinely approved at the regional level unless they are contrary to statute or the parties have agreed to a clearly inappropriate unit.\(^{302}\) Presumably, an employer and union could stipulate to a thousand-person bargaining unit consisting in the main of unauthorized workers. For reasons already described in the previous section, the employer in such a situation could agree to a unit for tactical reasons, suffer a loss in a representation election, stall in bargaining for a year,\(^{303}\) and at a tactically opportune moment discharge enough of the bargaining unit to destroy the union’s majority status and withdraw recognition soon thereafter. The NLRB should develop sufficient expertise to be able to quickly identify situations that carry the potential for this type of fruitless wrangling.

The sine qua non of making sound and expeditious decisions to protect otherwise vulnerable bargaining units is to identify cases that are likely to present immigration issues and to devise strategies in those cases to quickly ascertain whether the involved employer has “knowingly” employed unauthorized workers. Armed with that kind of evidence, the NLRB could move more confidently in the knowledge that courts may be more likely to accept its equitable arguments when it is engaged with employers in a battle

\(^{300}\) A party may be permitted to make an offer of proof on the issue, however. Hoffman Memorandum, supra note 32, at 5 § E.


\(^{302}\) See NLRB CaseHandling Manual (Part Two) § 11084.2 (stating that an election under terms contrary to the NLRA should not be solicited or approved and that the regional office must not conduct an election covering a clearly inappropriate unit even if the union and the employer agree).

\(^{303}\) See Brooks v. NLRB, 348 U.S. 96, 98-99 (1954) (affirming that following formal certification union entitled to irrebuttable presumption of majority support for one year during which time employer has duty to bargain in good faith).
of “public interests.” Although inquiries in this area would be sensitive, the NLRB could require employers to submit I-9 records as part of its initial representation case processing. Possession of this data would allow the NLRB to more carefully evaluate future employer claims of unknowingly hiring or retaining unauthorized workers. If such a claim is bona fide, the name of the disputed employee should be reflected in the records with an indication of the documents the employee submitted during the employment process.304 If that information is missing305 the NLRB will be in a position to argue to a court that the employer was not actually “unknowing,”306 which should substantially improve its equitable position.

In Hoffman, Chief Justice Rehnquist scoffed at the notion that the NLRB had made any attempt in its rules and procedures to accommodate the policies of IRCA because it was “recognizing employer misconduct but discounting the misconduct of illegal alien employees.”307 This raises an excellent point, though possibly not the one the Chief Justice intended.

The NLRB should accommodate the policies of the IRCA by recognizing and making use of the details of the immigration misconduct of employers. The Hoffman Court accepted that the employer was not aware of the involved employee’s violation of the immigration laws.308 That makes the case distinguishable, on equitable grounds, from the myriad of cases in which employers are keenly aware of the immigration status of their workers who are seeking unionization. While it is true that the unlawful immigration acts of an employer do not erase the unlawful immigration acts of a worker, “the question presented here [is] better analyzed through a wider lens, focused as it must be on a legal landscape now significantly changed.”309

As presumed experts in industrial experience, the NLRB must marshal a wide variety of facts, arguments, and perspectives applicable to bargaining units heavily comprised of unauthorized workers. If it does not, those

304. See generally 8 U.S.C. § 1324a(b). While employers may attempt to argue that the documents are confidential or privileged, § 1324a(b)(4) authorizes copying of the documents as “... otherwise permitted under law....” Any question on this point should be quickly resolvable by the Attorney General. Following the Hoffman majority’s scolding of the NLRB for not accommodating IRCA policies, see text supra at 803-04, the NLRB should argue for intergovernmental cooperation.

305. 8 U.S.C. § 1324a(b)(3)(B) (employer required to retain employment verification forms for three years after date of hire or one year after the date of termination, whichever is later).

306. Whatever the ramifications of that conclusion under immigration law, it will smack of pretext in labor law contexts. In any subsequent charge alleging, for example, the unlawful discharge of an unauthorized worker for union activity, this kind of pretext may prove useful in rebutting a defense of good faith compliance with immigration law. See, e.g., NLRB v. Kolkka, 170 F.3d 937, 940 (9th Cir. 1999) (quoting New Foodland, Inc., 205 N.L.R.B. 418, 420 (1973)) (“If the reason asserted by an employer for a discharge is a pretext, then the nature of the pretext is immaterial. That is true even where the pretext involves a reliance on state or local laws”).


308. Id. at 140-41.

309. Id. at 147.
bargaining units will be rendered disposable, further calling into question the practical significance of unauthorized workers' employee status under the NLRA.

VI. CONCLUSION

It is unlikely that the full extent of the Hoffman opinion's ripple effect has been felt by NLRB prosecutors. However, at this juncture a number of observations can be made. First, the NLRB as an institution should be prepared to engage arguments that its attorneys breach professional responsibility norms if they fail to disclose evidence of immigration illegality of which the NLRB knew or arguably should have known. Second, the complicated question of how to credibly and persuasively present to fact finders witnesses who are unauthorized workers must be broached at both the micro level of trial tactics and at the macro level of institutional rule formulation. Finally, in light of the complexities of cases involving unauthorized workers, any resulting certified bargaining units will have to be protected in novel ways because of the ability of employers to discharge unauthorized workers engaged in NLRA activity without significant remedial consequence. The absence of remedy will, over time, function as an inducement for employers to simply extinguish bargaining units by tactically discharging unauthorized workers.

The difficulty of these cases is matched by their importance. The statistical evidence of the continuing presence of immigrants in the workplace is overwhelming. It is conceivable that immigrant workers in the coming decades will comprise the fastest growing segment of the workforce.\(^{310}\) In light of this continuing growth, refusal to treat immigrant workers—whether authorized or unauthorized—as full and equal labor market participants is both contrary to American values\(^ {311}\) and breathtakingly unmindful of the lessons of past industrial conflict. It is striking that not once in the Hoffman opinion did the Supreme Court discuss NLRA polices. Instead, the Court trained its fire on the NLRB as a headless and purposeless administrative agency that had somehow wandered into alien statutory terrain. But in a former time, a prior justice of the Court, Oliver Wendell Holmes, perfectly understood and articulated the policy that culminated in the NLRA:

One of the eternal conflicts out of which life is made up is that between the effort of every man to get the most he can for his services, and that of

\(^{310}\) See Passel and Cohn, supra note 28, at 10.

\(^{311}\) Ellen Dannin, *NLRA Values, Labor Values, American Values*, 26 Berkeley J. Emp. & Lab. L. 223, 229 (2005) ("NLRA policies matter... [because]... they say that work and the way workers are treated is central to determining the sort of country the United States will be [and because] [t]hey provide the tools so workplaces can operate on principles consistent with those of a democratic country").
society, disguised under the name of capital, to get his services for the least possible return. Combination on the one side is patent and powerful. Com-
bination on the other is the necessary and desirable counterpart, if the battle is to be carried on in a fair and equal way.  

The NLRB’s mission today is as relevant and noble as ever. If the battle between disorganized workers—unauthorized workers in this variant of the conflict—and highly organized employers is to carry on with some semblance of fairness and equality, the mediator of that battle, the NLRB, should not engage in the retreat from the field that the Hoffman Memorandum represents. Rather, the NLRB should combatively embrace Hoffman’s paradoxes and move forward with its mission.

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