



Everyday violence, structural racism and mistreatment at the US–Mexico border



Samantha Sabo^{a,*}, Susan Shaw^b, Maia Ingram^a, Nicolette Teufel-Shone^c,
Scott Carvajal^a, Jill Guernsey de Zapien^a, Cecilia Rosales^d, Flor Redondo^e,
Gina Garcia^e, Raquel Rubio-Goldsmith^f

^a University of Arizona, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, Arizona Prevention Research Center, United States

^b University of Arizona, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, School of Anthropology, United States

^c University of Arizona, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, Division of Health Promotion Science, United States

^d University of Arizona, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, Division of Community, Environment, and Policy, United States

^e Campesinos Sin Fronteras, United States

^f University of Arizona, Mexican American Studies and Research Center, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 27 July 2013

Received in revised form

20 January 2014

Accepted 2 February 2014

Available online 6 February 2014

Keywords:

USA

US–Mexico border

Immigration

Mistreatment

Discrimination

Stress

Farmworkers

ABSTRACT

Immigration laws that militarize communities may exacerbate ethno-racial health disparities. We aimed to document the prevalence of and ways in which immigration enforcement policy and militarization of the US–Mexico border is experienced as everyday violence. Militarization is defined as the saturation of and pervasive encounters with immigration officials including local police enacting immigration and border enforcement policy with military style tactics and weapons. Data were drawn from a random household sample of US citizen and permanent residents of Mexican descent in the Arizona border region (2006–2008). Qualitative and quantitative data documented the frequency and nature of immigration related profiling, mistreatment and resistance to institutionalized victimization. Participants described living and working in a highly militarized environment, wherein immigration-related profiling and mistreatment were common immigration law enforcement practices. Approximately 25% of respondents described an immigration-related mistreatment episode, of which 62% were personally victimized. Nearly 75% of episodes occurred in a community location rather than at a US port of entry. Participant mistreatment narratives suggest the normalization of immigration-related mistreatment among the population. Given border security remains at the core of immigration reform debates, it is imperative that scholars advance the understanding of the public health impact of such enforcement policies on the daily lives of Mexican-origin US permanent residents, and their non-immigrant US citizen co-ethnics. Immigration policy that sanctions institutional practices of discrimination, such as ethno-racial profiling and mistreatment, are forms of structural racism and everyday violence. Metrics and systems for monitoring immigration and border enforcement policies and institutional practices deleterious to the health of US citizens and residents should be established.

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1. Introduction

This study aimed to document the prevalence of and ways in which US citizen and permanent residents of Mexican descent experience immigration policy and militarization of the Arizona

border region. The concept of everyday violence, or violence that is normalized by marginalized groups, is situated at the ‘capillary level’ and focuses on the daily micro-level interactions that directly and indirectly impose violence on individuals (Scheper-Hughes, 2004, p. 276). Such violence can render structural racism, defined by Krieger et al. (1993, p. 938) as ‘the exploitive and oppressive social relationships that simultaneously define racial/ethnic groups and cause a system of inequalities that become embodied as racial/ethnic health inequities,’ invisible to its victims (Bourgeois, 2009; Quesada et al., 2011). In essence, everyday violence on the US–Mexico border is the observable and violent manifestation of

* Corresponding author. University of Arizona, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, Arizona Prevention Research Center, Division of Health Promotion Science, 1295 N. Martin Avenue, Campus PO Box 245209, Drachman Hall, Tucson, AZ 85724, United States.

E-mail address: sabo@email.arizona.edu (S. Sabo).

structural racism and is the space where the arm of the state directly confronts the oppressed.

Specifically, we are concerned with how militarized zones of the Arizona border are experienced and normalized by US citizen and permanent residents of Mexican descent. We define militarization as the saturation of and pervasive encounters with immigration officials including local police enacting immigration and border enforcement policy with military style tactics and weapons (Dunn, 1996). Within militarized zones, encounters with officials can occur in public and private spaces in the form of formal and informal checkpoints, discretionary identity inspection, and arbitrary abuse and detention (Duschinski, 2009; Goldsmith et al., 2009). Research has shown that militarization of communities contributes to a collective experience of being under siege (Bourgois, 2004; Dunn, 2009; Duschinski, 2009) in which targeted groups endure cessation of their own identity and citizenship (Romero and Serag, 2004; Russell-Brown, 2004; Weitzer and Tuch, 2002). Such 'identity encounters' and the associated arbitrary consequences serve to compound targeted groups' suspicion and distrust of state institutions and authority (Duschinski, 2009; Warner, 2006). Targeted groups often strategically use silence and minimization of victimization as coping strategies for self-preservation (Green, 1994). Chronic suppression of traumatic events may be internalized and manifest as stress, anxiety and increased risk for debilitating mental and physical health conditions (G.C. Gee et al., 2012; Thoits, 2010). Fear of reprisal, criminalization, and lack of pathways for resistance to human rights violations have also been shown to be detrimental to health (Green, 1994; Vargas, 2001; Warner, 2006).

While the everyday violence of structural racism inherent in many immigration and border enforcement policies have historically plagued Mexican origin residents of the borderlands (Orrenius, 2004), their felt effects may have been particularly palpable during the time of this research, 2006–2008. Between these years, Arizona enacted restrictive immigration law related to education, employment, identification, law enforcement, and language (Green, 2011; Goldsmith and Romero, 2008). Simultaneous increases in capital and human resources to the Office of Homeland Security in form of US border patrol agents and National Guard, border fencing and technology transformed Arizona border communities into highly militarized environments (Goldsmith and Romero, 2008). Locally, anti-immigrant militia groups were also present in most rural Arizona border communities, while the pressure for local law enforcement to assume federal immigration law enforcement responsibilities was also mounting (Goldsmith and Romero, 2008). Thus, during the time of this study, residents were operating within a particularly anti-immigrant political landscape, one that was highly focused on restricting access to public services paralleled by an unprecedented accumulation of state and federal resources for Arizona–Mexico border security (McNicoll, 2012; Rodriguez and Padilla, 2010; E.A. Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012).

Emerging evidence has demonstrated an inverse relationship between restrictive or punitive immigration policies and major social determinants of health, specifically in access to health and social services, education opportunities, and adequate employment remuneration (Acevedo-Garcia et al., 2012; Hacker et al., 2011; Edna A. Viruell-Fuentes, 2011). Immigration health scholars have also begun to examine how an anti-immigrant climate has the potential to increase levels of discrimination, fear, stress, and illness among immigrant populations (Carvajal et al., 2012; Gilbert C. Gee, 2011; Hardy et al., 2012; E. A. Viruell-Fuentes, 2007). Most recently, anti-immigrant policies have been argued to produce the conflation of ethnicity and immigration status at both interpersonal and institutional levels, thus creating a hostile environment for entire

ethnic groups, regardless of immigration status (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). According to Viruell-Fuentes et al. (2012) '...all Latinos [in the US] are perceived as Mexican, all Mexicans are seen as immigrants, and they in turn are all cast as undocumented'. Mexican origin immigrants and their non-immigrant co-ethnics of the Arizona borderlands experience day-to-day ethnic and immigration related discrimination, stress, limited mobility, and fear of accessing health and social services (Acevedo-Garcia et al., 2012; Carvajal et al., 2012; Dreby, 2010). Specifically, institutionalized ethno-racial profiling in immigration and local law enforcement, or the sanctioned use of 'Mexicanness' or 'Mexican appearance' as probable cause for citizen inspection, has been documented among Mexican US citizen and permanent residents since 1994 (Goldsmith et al., 2009; R. Koulisch et al., 1994). As immigration reform emerges as a highly salient political issue for both political parties, and border security remains at the core of immigration reform debates, it is imperative that scholars advance the understanding of the public health impact of such enforcement policies on the daily lives of Mexican-origin US permanent residents, and their non-immigrant US citizen co-ethnics.

2. Methods

The National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety-funded 'Challenges to Farmworker Health at the US–Mexico Border' study (CFH) is a cross-sectional, community-based participatory research study conducted by the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH) and the Mexican American Studies and Research Center (MASRC) of the University of Arizona, in close collaboration with community-based partner agencies located along the Arizona border with Mexico (2006–2008). In line with the tenets of community-based participatory research, this study was the result of a 20-year history of collaborative public health research and practice efforts between MEZCOPH and Campesinos Sin Fronteras, a community-based organization aimed at improving the social determinants of health of Mexican immigrant families, who are primarily employed in agricultural work, and a regional human rights organization. This study specifically responded to community-identified concerns for the health and wellbeing of the farmworker population and the increased militarization of the region. University and community partners engaged as equal partners in the full spectrum of research, including study design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results (Wallerstein and Duran, 2003). Community Health Workers, or *Promotoras de Salud* as they are known in the borderlands, were especially integral to study design, instrument development, and data collection efforts. *Promotoras* shared cultural and linguistic characteristics with the community members they served, were trained by MEZCOPH research staff to conduct face-to-face surveys in the home, and collected the majority of survey data.

The CFH survey included a random household sample of 299 predominately US citizen and permanent residents of Mexican descent living and working in the Arizona–Sonora, Mexico border region. Participants were male and female, aged at least 21 years, reported working in US agriculture in the previous 12 months, and lived in the surrounding Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, border counties. Survey questions were based on National and California agricultural workers surveys, US immigration ethno racial profiling encounter survey, and a recently developed Border Community Immigration Stress Scale (BCISS) (Carvajal et al., 2012). A detailed description of all survey instruments and the present CFH study, sampling frame, and partner agencies can be found elsewhere (Carvajal et al., 2012).

We undertook a sequenced analysis of quantitative and qualitative CFH survey data (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003), using

qualitative data to enhance and elaborate on quantitative results. We first analyzed quantitative data to describe the population and establish a baseline prevalence of immigration related encounters with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration officials and local police. Next, we conducted directed content analysis of short immigration related encounter narratives. These narratives provided further information on the specific forms of immigration related mistreatment experienced personally or witnessed and illuminated the everyday violence of border enforcement policy and militarization of the US–Mexico border region. Lastly, we triangulated quantitative and qualitative data and assessed the relationship between respondents who reported a mistreatment encounter and those with no reported mistreatment. We hypothesized that respondents who had experienced mistreatment would experience greater levels of structural vulnerability and would therefore be more likely to be female, younger, and have lower levels of education and income compared to those who did not report a mistreatment episode.

2.1. Quantitative component

Descriptive statistics were calculated for four quantitative survey components, including: (1) selected demographics (2) prevalence and type of perceived ethno racial profiling, (3) frequency and location of sightings of immigration officials and (4) direct encounters with immigration officials, including immigration related detention. In the case of perceived use of ethno-racial profiling by immigration officials, Promotoras asked respondents, 'Do you believe that immigration officials use the following information to differentiate between those individuals with undocumented immigration status and US residents? ... Mexican appearance, foreign appearance, skin color, Spanish language, clothing, type of vehicle'.

Selected immigration related stressors were also measured through the Border Community Immigration Stress Scale (BCISS), a 24-item stress scale that measures multiple context relevant stressors experienced in the previous 3 months. BCISS considers the presence and intensity of stressors salient to Mexican descent populations and community characteristics of the US–Mexico border (Carvajal et al., 2012). BCISS stress domains include border and migration stress, acculturation stressors, barriers to health care, discrimination, economic strains, and family separation. BCISS has demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.91$). Full description of the BCISS and its relation to health status can be found elsewhere (Carvajal et al., 2012). For purposes of this study, we focused on three stressors specific to border enforcement policy strategies: (1) presence of US military at the border, (2) encounters with immigration officials, or (3) encounters with local police.

2.2. Qualitative component

To elicit the narrative, Promotoras asked respondents if 'In the last 2 years, have you [personally experienced or personally witnessed] an encounter with a US immigration officials... at the US port of entry or at a non US port of entry location.' Participants provided short narratives regarding encounters with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration officials, defined as U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), as well as local police. Promotoras hand recorded narrative data in third person voice. In some cases narratives were captured in the margins of the survey and not in direct response to the above mentioned question. Sometimes other questions provoked the narrative response. In these cases Promotoras wrote notes in the margins of the survey to indicate that the respondent had originally said they had no such encounter, and only after the respondent told their narrative did

Table 1

Demographics, experiences and encounters with US immigration officials and intensely reported stressors Among US Citizen and Permanent Residents of Mexican Descent of the Arizona Border Region 2006–2008.

	Total N = 299 % (N)
Demographics	
Age, mean (SD)	44 (11.0)
High school graduate +	17 (50)
US citizen/permanent resident	92 (272)
Age at immigration to US, mean (SD)	34 (11.2)
Years living in US, mean (SD)	10 (8.8)
Years in US agriculture, mean (SD)	18 (12.2)
Daily immigration sightings, last 12 mo	89 (258)
Immigration official sightings in community settings (non US port entry)	
Neighborhood	94 (282)
Worksite	60 (178)
Corner store	44 (133)
Supermarket	22 (67)
Characteristics used by immigration officials to identify undocumented persons	
Total sum, mean (SD)	4.2 (1.9)
<i>Perceived immigration officials to used:</i>	
Type of clothing	86 (298)
Type of vehicle	77 (228)
Mexican appearance	69 (207)
Foreign-looking	72 (215)
Skin color	66 (196)
Spanish language	57 (172)
Immigration detention experiences	
Local police questioned immigration status, last 24 mo	11 (34)
Local police called immigration	5 (12)
Detained by immigration	3 (7)
Reporting immigration encounters	
Believes negative immigration related encounters should be reported to DHS officials	99 (296)
Knows how to officially document an immigration related mistreatment encounter with DHS	32 (95)
BCISS self-reported stressors	
Military patrolling the border	30 (90)
Encounters with local police	25 (73)
Encounters with immigration officials	21 (62)

the Promotora return to the original open-ended question and document the narrative regarding the encounter or encounters with immigration officials.

Short answer immigration related encounter narratives were transcribed, coded, and analyzed in their original language of Spanish by the first author. The first author is bilingual in the Spanish language and has both quantitative and qualitative research experience. Narratives were organized and analyzed in two distinct phases. The first phase of content analysis was directed and based on CFH quantitative mistreatment categories. Categories included: type of mistreatment (physical and verbal mistreatment, emotional distress, or ethno-racial profiling); whether mistreatment was experienced personally or witnessed; the location of the mistreatment episode (a US port of entry or a non-port of entry community location); and the gender of the respondent. Frequencies were established for each category. Through Fisher's Exact test, we assessed the relationship between mistreatment and selected quantitative demographic measures, experiences with immigration authorities and three border specific BCISS stressors. Results of this analysis are presented in narrative form only. The second phase of content analysis was guided by the concept of everyday violence. The following themes were identified: discretionary stops and detentions, 'identity encounter', excessive presence of immigration officials (public and private spaces), perception of officials acting with impunity, bearing witness to victimization, and resistance to mistreatment.

Memos were developed to summarize findings and were coupled with representative quotes to illuminate the category. The first author independently coded the narratives using Nvivo 8 software. A random sample of 10% of all qualitative responses were independently coded by a second researcher, resulting in 90% inter rater reliability rate (Patton, 2002). The first author using STATA 10.0 software performed all statistical analysis. Human subjects approval was obtained from the University of Arizona for both the original CFH study and the current secondary analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Description of study sample

Overall, study participants were permanent residents or US born and naturalized citizens, in their mid to late forties, had less than a high school education and reported an average of 20 years of experience working in US agriculture (Table 1). The majority of respondents described first immigrating to the US in their mid-thirties and reported living permanently in the US for a decade on average. The majority of participants reported close ties with Mexico, including children and relatives currently living in Mexico and sending money to relatives in Mexico (data not shown).

3.2. Encounters with U.S. immigrant officials

Approximately 90% of participants reported daily sightings of immigration officials. Participants reported seeing immigration officials in a variety of non-US port of entry locations, most predominantly in neighborhoods, worksites and corner or convenience stores (Table 1). More than half of all participants reported seeing immigration officials at their worksite. Half of all participants believed that immigration officials use ethno-racial profiling to differentiate undocumented individuals from the larger population. Most participants believed that immigration officials used type of clothing (86%) or vehicle type (77%) to identify undocumented persons and 72% believed foreign appearance was a factor. More than 50% of participants believed Mexican appearance, skin color and use of the Spanish language were profiling characteristics.

In terms of immigration detention experiences, local police detained and questioned the immigration status of approximately 11% of participants. Half of participants (5%) reported that local police called immigration authorities, and 3%, were eventually detained by immigration officials. Almost all believed that negative encounters with immigration officials should be reported, but less than one third of all participants reported knowing how to file a complaint.

Approximately 25% of border residents of Mexican descent described a personally experienced or witnessed immigration related mistreatment encounter (Table 2). Mistreatment was defined as an act of aggression or use of excessive force by an immigration official not in line with codes of conduct as per the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (R.E. Koulish, 1994). Approximately 75% of mistreatment encounters occurred in a community location, and more than 50% of all mistreatment encounters were experienced personally as opposed to witnessed.

We also looked for difference between those participants with an immigration related mistreatment experience and those participants without such an experience. BCISS measures of intensely reported stress by militar patrolling the border, encounters with local police or immigration officials were experienced at almost equal rates for both groups. Other than younger age among those with an immigration related mistreatment experience, no other significant differences were found.

Table 2

Frequency of immigration-related mistreatment by immigration officials among US citizen and permanent residents of Mexican descent of the Arizona border region by mistreatment type, location and gender, 2006–2008.

	Total % (N)	Male % (N)	Female % (N)
Mistreatment	22 (65/299)	43 (28/154)	57 (37/145)
Mistreatment type			
Personal	62 (41/66)	46 (19/41)	54 (22/41)
Witnessed	38 (25/66)	36 (9/25)	64 (16/25)
Mistreatment location			
US port of entry	37 (18/48)	50 (9/18)	50 (9/18)
Other community location	72 (48/66)	40 (19/48)	60 (29/48)
Forms of mistreatment referenced by participants			
Physical	38 (28/66)	ND	ND
Verbal	23 (17/66)	ND	ND
Ethno-racial profiling	50 (33/66)	ND	ND

NS differ according to available data.

ND No data.

3.3. Physical mistreatment

Approximately 40% of respondents described an immigration related physical mistreatment encounter. Narratives described immigration officials beating community members and others with closed fists, with nightsticks, or repeated kicks to the head or ribcage. In several instances immigration officials brandished firearms and used handcuffs. In this scenario Juan (a pseudonym, as all participant names herein) described being forced into an immigration law enforcement vehicle against his will. Juan is a 38-year-old married man with three children and 21 years' experience working in US agriculture:

La persona cuento que a él lo habían tratado bien mal los oficiales de migración cuando el caminaba para su casa cuando lo paro un migra (oficial de migración) a lo hecho a la 'perrera' sin preguntarle si tenía papeles. El siente que fue un abuso porque lo empujaron para que se metiera y no le preguntaron si tenía papeles.'

[The person said that he had been treated really badly by immigration officials, once he was walking to his home when one immigration official put him in the back of the immigration vehicle (aka 'the dog kennel') without asking if he had papers [proof of immigration status]. He feels that this was an abuse because they pushed for him to get in [the vehicle] and never asked if he had papers]

In open-ended survey questions of respondents regarding experienced or witnessed mistreatment, physical abuse was just one dimension of mistreatment participants described.

3.4. Verbal and emotional mistreatment

Approximately one quarter of community residents described an encounter where they either experienced or witnessed the verbal or emotional mistreatment by immigration official. Participants described immigration officials' behaviors as rude, arrogant, and offensive and many described officials' use of intimidating language and gestures. Participants said immigration officials often spoke in a suspicious and confusing manner and seemed to be attempting to trick them or provoke nervous behavior. These instances often caused emotional distress including anger, fear, embarrassment, shame, humiliation, and nervousness. Emotional distress also resulted from personal and witnessed mistreatment during home and vehicle inspections, where damage to personal property often occurred. Immigration officials entered residents'

homes on the pretext of seeking people who were aiding and abetting undocumented individuals. Immigration officials broke down front and back doors and property fencing, often scaring unsuspecting family members sleeping in their home or trailer. Josefina, a 49-year-old married woman with three children, described witnessing immigration officials break into her neighbor's house and humiliate her neighbor's family:

Esta persona miro cuando saltaron la casa de vecino porque la border patrol pensaba que tenían a indocumentados en la casa. La migra llevo a tumbar a la puerta y asusto a todo la familia. Los hizo que pusieron boca abajo en la calle enfrente de toda la comunidad. No hallaron nada los dejaron y ninguna disculpa les dieron. Ni la puerta les arreglaron aunque dijeron que si se las iban a arreglar.

[This person observed immigration officials jump the fence of a neighbor because they thought they had undocumented persons hiding in the house. The officials broke down the front door and scared the whole family. Officials made the family lie face down in the street in front of the entire community. The officials found nothing and left without even an apology. They never fixed the door even though they said they were going to fix it.]

Systematic verbal abuse and humiliation were important techniques through which immigration officials expressed authority over community members. Their ability to accompany law enforcement action with verbal and emotional mistreatment was largely unchallenged, as discussed further below.

3.5. Ethno-racial profiling and discretionary stops

More than half of participants believed their personal or witnessed mistreatment encounter occurred because they were profiled by immigration officials. Participants described being randomly stopped, followed on foot, pulled over in personal vehicles or taxis, inspected while in private farmworker transportation buses, and waited for outside of stores or public bathrooms by immigration officials. Random citizen inspections often occurred at the US port of entry, where immigration officials do not require probable cause to search property or person. Octavio, a 59-year-old farmworker who immigrated permanently to the US at age 48, described a typical harassment episode at the US port of entry:

'El señor observo a su amigo que lo paró por que el perro detecto un olor en el carro. El perro al tratar de subirse al carro raspó todo el exterior de carro. En inspección secundaria no hallaron nada no le pintaron el carro e le dijeron que era la culpa de el por "loco" se trató de formular una queja sin resolución.'

[This man observed his friend stopped [at a US port of entry] because the immigration dog detected an odor in the car. When the dog jumped up on the car, it completely scratched the outside of the car. On secondary inspection immigration did not find anything [in the car] and they did not paint the car and told his friend that the damage to his car was his fault, like a crazy person, his friend tried to formulate a complaint but nothing was resolved'.]

Some residents referenced their Mexican appearance or skin color as the only probable cause for the encounter. Immigration status was often questioned, and proof of citizenship or residency was required. Gerardo, a 43-year-old permanent resident from Michoacán, Mexico, who has been working in US agriculture since the age of 23, describes being victimized at gunpoint:

... el iba corriendo por el canal, haciendo ejercicio cuando lo pararon lo hicieron que acostara en el piso, lleno de animalitos. Pensaba que esa 'indocumentado' lo acostaron al arma de fuego y lo detuvieron hasta que llamo a sus parientes que le trajeron los papeles. Dice el señor que todo le ocurrió por ser un 'mexicano muy oscuro'.

[... He was running for exercise near the irrigation canal, when he was stopped and detained by immigration officials who thought he was 'undocumented'. They made him lie down on the ground, which was full of insects at gunpoint until he called his relatives to bring his documents. The man believes this all happened because he is a 'very dark Mexican'.]

In some instances, officials seemed to stop community residents based on their activity and body language, which was perceived as suspicious. Angela, a 27-year-old US citizen, described being followed by officials on her way home from work in the lettuce fields:

'El otro día que venía llegando de mi trabajo llevaba prisa porque quería usar el baño y los emigrantes fueron tras de mí; esperaron hasta que yo saliera del baño para pedirme que mostraron una identificación de EEUU para verificar que yo tuviera mis documentos y yo soy ciudadana.'

[The other day returning from work I was in a hurry because I had to go to the bathroom. The immigration officials were behind me and they waited for me to leave the bathroom to ask me to show them US identification and to verify that I had my documents and I am US citizen.]

Because participants were primarily farmworkers, many described how immigration officials boarded private transportation buses used by local agricultural companies to transport farmworkers to the worksite. They observed officials inspecting each person on the bus by walking slowly down the bus aisle, as if they were looking for someone in particular. This type of random inspection also occurred at the agricultural job site. Farmworkers described several instances where officials showed up unannounced on the job site and harassed workers. Eugenio, a 47-year-old US citizen with more than 20 years' experience working in US agriculture, described how officials provoked his co-worker Rogelio, who was engaged in the precarious work of harvesting lemons:

'Cuando trabajaba en limón llevo la patrulla fronteriza y le pido documentos a un compañero el estaba sobre su escalera cortando limón e le dijo "sus documentos" y el compañero dijo ahorita que hecho estos limones que traigo el mano; el emigrante dijo 'No ahora' y jalo la escalera de compañero arrojamente, el compañero no formulo queja por temor.'

[When I worked cutting lemons, a Border Patrol agent came into the orchard and questioned my colleague, 'Your documents?' My colleague was up on his ladder cutting lemons and replied to the agent just a minute let me put these lemons down and the agent said, 'No now!' and angrily shook and threw him off the ladder. My colleague did not file a complaint due to fear.]

Community residents were also accused of being 'polleras (os),' or human smugglers, when their skin color did not match that of the child with whom they were traveling. These encounters were accompanied by verbal, physical mistreatment, emotional distress, and long detention times. This type of encounter mainly occurred at the US port of entry and at permanent immigration checkpoints located on major outbound highways. For example, a female immigration official accused Raquel, a 57-year-old grandmother

with more than three decades' experience working in US agriculture, of engaging in human trafficking of her own grandson; both she and her grandson were detained at the US port of entry for 3 h:

'La detuvieron en la pasada porque no le creyeron que era su nieto la detuvieron 3 horas la trataron muy mal y más una mujer que le decía que era 'pollera' se tuvo quedar hasta que fue su hijo y nuera.'

[She was detained in the past because they did not believe it was her grandson, they were detained for 3 h and treated very badly, at one point, a female [agent] accused her of being a "pollera" (human trafficker). She and her grandson were detained until her son and daughter arrived.]

Male respondents also experienced accusations of false identity by immigration officials. An official verbally and physically abused Julian, a 47-year-old grandfather, when he tried to cross into the US with his grandson. Officials accused Julian of not being the child's grandfather. It is unclear where the child was held when his grandfather was being abused or if the child witnessed the humiliation of his grandfather.

3.6. Witnessing abuse of border crossers

Respondents distinguished mistreatment of unauthorized border crossers as comparatively worse than what they experienced as US citizens and permanent residents. Participants described witnessing immigration officials' 'trapping', beating, and threatening persons they perceived as unauthorized border crossers, even when these individuals appeared not to resist arrest. Antonio, a 37-year-old, married man with three children, described watching immigration officials' treatment of a group of boys crossing into the US:

Un día unas muchachos cruzaron y unos migras que no estaban en servicio los detuvieron, los aventaron a la banqueta hasta que sacaron su pistola para amenazarlos y les puso las esposas. Los maltrataron y después llamaron a la patrulla fronteriza que si estaba en servicio, todos fueron muy prepotentes.

[One day some boys crossed [into the US illegally] and some off duty immigration officials stopped them and tossed the boys to the curb, they pulled out their guns to threaten them and then handcuffed them. They [immigration officials] abused the boys and then called Border Patrol agents who were on duty, everyone was very arrogant.]

Respondents described scenarios in which immigration officials chased, pushed, tackled, or threw border crossers to the ground. These public displays of power by officials took place in public parks and neighborhoods. While walking on a main community-walking path, which runs along the border fence with Mexico, Jose observed officials beat a suspected border crosser:

La migra tiraba aun muchacho que parecer acababa de cruzarse lo aventaron al suelo y miro como empezaron a golpearlo aunque el muchacho no puso resistencia.

[Immigration officials threw a boy to the ground who had just crossed illegally, the official just threw him to the ground and started beating him, even though the boy did not resist.]

3.7. Resistance to mistreatment

Although not common, in some instances, respondents described ways in which they or others attempted to document

mistreatment, mainly through video, observation, and complaint making. Yoli, a 23-year old mother of two children who had been working in agriculture since she was 15, described how the community reacted to a public act of violence:

'Una patrulla fronteriza tumbo a un muchacho a la calle y lo tenía a patadas, cuando el migra miro que la gente de la comunidad comenzó a salir de sus casas molesta por como lo estaba tratando, el emigrante subió al indocumentado a empujones al carro.'

[A border patrol knocked a young male to the ground and had him on his knees, community members upset by the way he was treating the boy began to come out of their homes, when the agent observed this he shoved the boy into the car in handcuffs.]

In another instance, Luisa, a 37, year old described how a neighbor made her dismay known to the official regarding the way he was treating the border crosser.

'Una vez venia corriendo un muchacho y el migra le cuento algo a los pies y lo tumbo en la calle, después lo pateo, y una vecina molesta salió y le dijo que dejara a que si no lo dejaba le iba a tomar video.'

[One time, a young male was running and an immigration official threw something at the boy's feet which caused him to fall into the street, then the immigration officials started to kick the boy, an upset neighbor came out of her house and told the agent that if he did not stop kicking the boy that she would take video]

4. Discussion

Everyday violence came in the form of overt physical, verbal, and emotional mistreatment by immigration officials. These mistreatment encounters occurred in both port of entry and community locations while community members were engaged in everyday activities such as traveling to and from work, working, shopping or visiting family members in Mexico. These events were everyday occurrences and were perceived by respondents to be excessive. Ethno-racial profiling and discretionary stops were a common practice and often ended with feelings of anger and humiliation. Acts of resistance to mistreatment were less often mentioned, and among those instances of resistance that were mentioned were first hand observations of community members speaking back to immigration officials about mistreatment.

4.1. The militarization of everyday life

The militarization and policing of the everyday life of Latino immigrants and their non-immigrant co-ethnics communicates the power of the state to marginalize and maintain social control of its residents through military means (Dunn, 1996; Green, 2011). In this study, military style weaponry and force were used to 'trap' and 'publicly beat' or 'load up and take away' community residents. Such tactics of low intensity conflict have been shown to create an anti-immigrant climate and fear among community members (Dunn, 1996; Green, 1994; Hardy et al., 2012) and contribute to the distrust of public institutions (Duschinski, 2009; Green, 1994). Furthermore, qualitative research on the impact of immigration enforcement laws in non border regions of the US has demonstrated an increase in hyper vigilance and limited mobility among Hispanic immigrants (Hacker et al., 2011; Hardy et al., 2012).

In previous research conducted in an urban US Southwest barrio, immigration related mistreatment episodes and the probability of having an encounter with an immigration authority was

positively associated with Mexican ethnicity, even after adjusting for citizenship status, socio economic status, gender and age (Goldsmith et al., 2009). Our data confirms these findings and demonstrates that such encounters were often coupled with intimidation, use of force and arbitrary detention evidenced by DHS officials patrolling parks, shops and neighborhoods on foot, bikes, and in 'dog catcher' style vehicles. The fear and humiliation inherent in these acts of intimidation have been shown to increase the risk for discrimination stress (Carvajal et al., 2012; Gilbert C. Gee, 2011; Gee et al., 2006; Magaña and Hovey, 2003).

In order to interpret the way in which the 'routinization' and 'normalization' of human suffering occurs, we draw on our own reflections of how residents described their experience. Residents often used language that minimized their experiences of explicit and implicit immigration related violence. Compelling stories of personal or witnessed victimization were often prefaced or concluded with the observation, 'But that's the only thing that's happened to me'. These verbal techniques of minimization that follow testimonies of abuse in the presence of grandchildren or being held at gunpoint and detained for hours while engaged in normal everyday activities suggest that for many respondents such violence has become internalized or normalized.

Furthermore, narratives were often captured in the margins of the survey in response to a question related to encounters with immigration officials. Promotoras sometimes wrote notes to indicate that the respondent had originally said they had no such mistreatment encounter, then after the respondent related a mistreatment narrative, the Promotora went back and changed the answer to the affirmative. These 'marginal stories' are also testimony as to how respondents became aware of their mistreatment by talking it over with a Promotora in the context of completing the survey. Anthropologist Linda Green describes the strategic use of minimization and silence in the presence of horrendous violence and overt racism. She describes this silence as both enlightening as a form of coping and self-protection and disturbing as a signal of the fear and terror entrenched in processes of institutional racism (Green, 1994). Such chronic minimization and internalization of civil and human rights violations can contribute to increased risk for stress and poor mental health (Finch et al., 2000; McClure et al., 2010; Sawyer et al., 2012; Thoits, 2010).

4.2. Everyday violence and stress

As reported elsewhere (Sabo et al., submitted for publication), US citizens and permanent residents of Mexican descent who witnessed immigration related mistreatment experienced a 2.3-increased risk for stress (OR 2.3, CI 1.2, 4.1) even after controlling for socio economic, cultural and immigration trajectory covariates. Psychosocial stressors and associated physiologic stress responses have negative impacts on health status. This includes evidence for compromised immune function, heightened inflammation responses, greater obesity, and more severe chronic disease states such as diabetes (Cohen et al., 2007; O'Leary, 1990). US Mexican-descent adults have substantially higher age-adjusted rates of obesity and diabetes than non-Hispanic Whites and the overall US population (Control, 2011). Such inequalities require a more nuanced assessment of the unique environmental stressors related to immigration and border enforcement policies on morbidity and mortality among low income, medically underserved US citizen and permanent residents of Mexican decent. Specifically, we need to identify and test how structural racism creates anti immigrant environments and how these environments contribute to mental health problems and co-occurring chronic diseases.

Furthermore, discrimination stress is argued to proliferate over the life course and generation (Thoits, 2010). Through the concept

of 'link lives', stress experienced by an adult parent or family member can be transferred to children and other adults within the network (Gee et al., 2012; Thoits, 2010). Currently, large-scale investigations of the relationship between childhood trauma and mistreatment and well being in adulthood, such as the Adverse Childhood Experience or ACE study, lack immigration or discrimination related domains of victimization (Anda et al., 2010). Long term exposure to militarized zones and anti immigrant climates, including the excessive presence and encounters with immigration and law enforcement in childhood, may be important in understanding mental and physical health in adulthood (Bourgois, 2004; Bourgois et al., 2004). Collectively, such environments and policies may well contribute to the sustaining and widening of health inequities between social groups and across generations (Krieger, 2012; Thoits, 2010).

4.3. Limitation and strengths

The study is not generalizable to all US citizen and permanent residents of Mexican descent primarily working as farmworkers, who are on average younger, predominately undocumented, and have fewer years of experience working in US agriculture (Carroll et al., 2005). Thus our results may in fact underestimate the prevalence of immigration-related mistreatment in highly militarized Latino communities. Due to their geographic location at the US–Mexico border, study participants are more likely to be in frequent contact with immigration authorities compared to those individuals in non-border communities. However, encounters with immigration officials, including local police, have been documented as a stressor for non-farmworker, urban border populations of Mexican descent as well (Magaña and Hovey, 2003).

4.4. Policy implications and future research directions

In summary, this research provides evidence for the need to carefully consider the public health impact of enforcement of immigration laws that militarize whole communities. Immigration related mistreatment narratives presented here span the years 2004–2007, which mark a unique juncture in which anti-immigrant sentiment and the fervor for increased border security converged and proliferated in the form of restrictive immigration legislation throughout the US (Morse et al., 2007; Morse et al., 2012). Most notable of the anti-immigrant laws that both solidified and blurred the lines between federal and local immigration law enforcement capabilities was the Arizona Senate Bill 1070 (SB 1070) (Eagly, 2011). SB 1070 specifically authorized local police to request proof of citizenship and immigration status from anyone suspect of being in the country unlawfully (Eagly, 2011). Highly contentious, SB 1070 is argued to have increased ethno-racial profiling and criminalization of Mexican origin immigrants and their non-immigrant co-ethnics (E.A. Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). According to the American Civil Liberties Union, copycat laws have been enacted in five states, including Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina and Utah (ACLU, 2013). Mistreatment narratives are particularly relevant to the emerging Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 (S. 744). In its current form this legislation makes security of the US–Mexico border the cornerstone to the normalization of the immigration status of the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the US. Thus, narratives told in Arizona serve as the 'canary in the mine' for public health community and social justice allies of immigrant communities throughout the US.

Current discrimination and victimization measures do not adequately capture the potential impact of the everyday violence

of such policies on work, health and other areas of life. Recent work by Martínez et al. (2013) provide an exhaustive portrayal of immigration related victimization among recently deported undocumented immigrants. Instruments such as these may be adapted and coupled with clinical health outcome measures to understand the impact of such experiences on US citizen and resident populations of Mexican descent. Another public health policy research direction could include the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) database at Syracuse University which monitors staffing, spending, and enforcement activities of the federal government including, U.S. federal immigration enforcement. Linking such a database to national epidemiologic studies like the National Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos (HCHS/SOL) or the Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HHANES) could provide a more focused discussion on the impact of immigration and border enforcement practices and policies on health. Health policy research collaborations among US Departments of Health, Homeland Security and Justice, inclusive of civil liberty, human rights and community organizations should establish metrics and systems for monitoring immigration policies and institutional practices deleterious to the health of US citizens and residents (Martínez et al., 2013; Slack et al., 2013a,b).

Ultimately, collaboration among civil society and the State is necessary to achieve multi-level intervention and policy strategies to reduce risk and increase the public trust in immigration officials and local police. Community based participatory research approach coupled with rigorous qualitative and quantitative research design are essential in unraveling the complexity of interrelated ecological factors that contribute to stress and wellbeing within vulnerable communities.

5. Conclusion

Institutionalized practices of ethno-racial profiling by immigration officials are historically embedded and deeply entrenched at the institutional and individual levels, serving to reproduce inequality over time and at multiple levels (Farmer, 2004). This paper calls for public health to recognize these institutional practices of discrimination as a structural determinant of health and as forms of violence. Our findings merit a deeper investigation into the public health impact of immigration policy and associated anti-immigrant climate created for Mexican origin immigrants and their non-immigrant co-ethnics, including those immigration policy strategies that aim to secure the US–Mexico border through militarization and surveillance. Furthermore, we call for the strengthening of laws to stop racial profiling and inappropriate use of force and a commission of community leaders and local elected officials to monitor border security issues that impact the public's health in the region.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all of the community members for sharing their stories. We dedicate this work to the late Dr. Joel Meister for his commitment to social justice. The National Institute funded the original study for Occupational Safety and Health (R21 OH 008747). The California Endowment Program in Migration and Health Dissertation Grant and the Arizona Area Rural Health Professions Program Doctoral Scholarship sponsored analysis and write up.

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