



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.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

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

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7335142>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7335142>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)