



“They Dumped Me Like Trash”: The Social and Psychological Toll of Victimization on Latino Day Laborers’ Lives

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Highlights

- Latino day laborers are vulnerable to crime victimization in new immigrant settlement cities.
- Victimization led to sociocultural alienation, despair or desesperación, and problem drinking.
- Findings highlight the intersection of structural vulnerability, violence, and mental health.

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Abstract Although recent rhetoric links undocumented immigrants to criminality, reports indicate undocumented immigrants commit less crime than their native-born counterparts and that this vulnerable group may be at increased risk for criminal victimization. Immigrants living in new immigrant settlement cities may be particularly at risk for exposure to criminal victimization due to the vulnerabilities associated with a lack of an established Latino community and limited availability of culturally appropriate social services to provide support. This ethnographic study examines the experiences of victimization and its social and psychological toll of a street-recruited sample of Latino day laborers (LDLs) ($N = 25$) living and working in Baltimore, a new immigrant settlement city. Findings elucidate and describe the specific types of victimization experienced by LDLs, including workplace victimization (wage theft, abandonment at the jobsite, poor working conditions, verbal abuse) and street-level victimization (assault and robbery), as well as reveal the social and psychological toll of victimization (sociocultural alienation, despair or desesperación, and problem drinking) on their lives. Findings have implications for community psychology, through research and practice, as they provide insights for prevention and intervention within the intersection of

structural vulnerability (i.e., undocumented immigration status), violence, and mental health.

Keywords Latino day laborers · Latino immigrants · Crime victimization · New immigrant settlements · Immigrant mental health · Latino mental health

Introduction

Despite recent rhetoric linking criminality to undocumented immigrants, overwhelming research indicates that immigrants commit less crime than native-born populations (Adelman, Reid, Markle, Weiss, & Jaret, 2017; Klein, Allison, & Harris, 2017; Light & Miller, 2018), with some studies indicating that an increase in immigrants is often associated to lowered neighborhood crime (Light & Miller, 2018; Sampson, 2006, 2008). Undocumented immigrants may be instead at heightened risk for criminal victimization (Barranco & Shihadeh, 2015; Menjívar & Bejarano, 2004; Velazquez & Kempf-Leonard, 2010) as their “illegality” may produce social–structural vulnerability experienced via deportation fear and manifested through a lack of trust in police and other authorities (Quesada, Hart, & Bourgois, 2011; Theodore, 2013). The presence of this social phenomenon of exploitation is exemplified in the term, “Walking ATMs,” which encapsulates immigrant vulnerability to crime by linking the perception that Latino immigrants carry large amounts of cash (due to their reliance on a cash economy) with their fear to report crime to the police or other authorities (due to deportation fear) (Bauer, 2009; Fussell, 2011; Negi, Cepeda, & Valdez, 2013). To this end, the

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social context of immigrants' lives may not only be central to their exposure to victimization but may impact the social and psychological consequences of victimization on their lives.

While the bulk of studies on Latino immigrant crime victimization have been focused on traditional immigrant settlement cities, immigrants living in new immigrant settlement cities may be exposed to higher crime victimization vulnerability associated to the specific contextual features of such cities. Specifically, new immigrant settlement cities are characterized by the emergence of a new immigrant population within a context that lacks an established immigrant population that can serve as a source of comfort, familiarity, connection, and bridging to resources or mainstream social integration (Cepeda et al., 2012). Subsequently, new immigrant settlements often experience high need for specialized social services (linguistic, cultural, social) for these new immigrants yet generally have a dearth of bilingual, specialized services or outreach programs that are responsive to the unique needs of this population (Negi, Maskell, Goodman, Hooper, & Roberts, 2017).

This particular social–structural vulnerability of immigrants in new immigrant settlement cities has been hypothesized to heighten crime victimization. Specifically, Shihadeh and Barranco (2010) found that Latinos living in new immigrant settlement cities had nearly a 50% higher rate of homicide victimization than those who lived in traditional settlement areas and this was about double the White rate in such cities. Further, their study found that higher linguistic isolation and poverty were associated with higher homicide victimization in new immigrant settlement communities, but such risks were not conferred in traditional immigrant cities, leading them to postulate that the lack of an established community of Latinos exacerbated risk. Similarly, a pair of studies conducted in Post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, a city that experienced high Latino im/migration post-disaster to work on demolition and rebuilding efforts, identified structural risk factors, such as undocumented immigrant status, poverty, not knowing where and how to report crime, and employment in the informal day labor market, associated to crime victimization (Fussell, 2011; Negi, 2011). Specifically, both studies postulated that undocumented Latino immigrant men, who seek work in public street corners or parking lots of home improvement stores as day laborers, may be at particularly high risk for street-based crime due to their structural vulnerability and positionality as “illegals” working and living outside of the protections of mainstream social safety nets. These studies have been formative in describing how the social context of immigrants' lives may be central to their exposure to victimization but a little is known about the social and psychological toll of

such crime exposure on Latino day laborers' (LDL) lives particularly in new immigrant settlement contexts with limited community networks and social infrastructure for limited English speakers.

This ethnographic study elucidates how LDLs' themselves classify and describe their own victimization experiences within a new immigrant settlement context and the effects of such experiences on their lives. Specifically, this study explores the victimization experiences of a street-recruited sample of LDLs living and working in Baltimore, a new immigrant settlement city, and its impact on health and health behaviors. Results are likely to advance the science by moving past documenting victimization experiences to providing insight regarding how such incidents can impact the social and psychological well-being of a population that lives within the margins and lacks the social protections generally provided by traditional mainstream institutions to its citizenry.

Latino Day Laborers: A Structurally Vulnerable Population

Latino day laborers (LDLs) experience “multiple interacting social, economic, political, and sociological factors” (Fernández-Esquer, Agoff, & Leal, 2017, p. 3) that may heighten their exposure to violence, among other negative conditions, and contribute to negative mental health consequences. Organista's (2007) theoretical framework postulates that the behaviors of Latino immigrants may be influenced through the interplay of four different social ecological levels: (a) super structural level factors or macro-level political and social factors resulting in economic disadvantages and “illegality”; (b) structural level factors, characterized by policies and laws limiting undocumented immigrants' access to the social safety net including healthcare or labor regulations; (c) environmental factors such as living and working conditions; and (d) individual factors, including LDLs' social and psychological responses to their structural environmental conditions. Specifically, the only national survey conducted with day laborers ($N = 2,660$) indicates that LDLs are largely composed of undocumented immigrant workers who migrate to the United States to work and experience a high prevalence of workers' rights abuses; nearly half experience wage theft by employers and many experience dangerous, abusive, and exploitative work conditions (Valenzuela, Theodore, Melendez, & Gonzalez, 2006). While some research has qualitatively elucidated the day-to-day social suffering of LDLs' lives (Quesada et al., 2014) and contextualized the manifestation of *desesperación*, or despair induced by structural vulnerability and the repression of migration related goals (Negi, 2011; Organista, Ngo, Neilands, & Kral, 2017), a little is known about the impact

of victimization on LDLs' lives. This is a significant gap in the literature as the structural positionality of LDLs as undocumented male workers or a workforce often considered expendable and easily replaceable (Taran, 2001) may produce victimization implications that may be unique to this population.

Baltimore is a particularly relevant study context as it has experienced a doubling of the Latino population from 2000 to 2017 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017) yet the city struggles to provide an adequate social infrastructure to meet the needs of this population, including affordable housing, healthcare, language assistance, education, and employment (Negi et al., 2017). National data suggest that often Latinos are victims of violent crimes at higher rates in newly established Latino metropolitan areas compared to other areas (Xie & Planty, 2014). In Baltimore between 2005 and 2007, homicide mortality was found to be the fourth leading cause of death of Latinos after cancer, heart diseases, and accident related deaths (Baltimore City Health Department, 2011). Many of these immigrants migrate to the United States due to increasing violence, high homicide rates along with poor governance in their countries of origin (Congressional Research Service, 2019). Further, many migrate to seek economic opportunities and to financially support their families in their country of origin (Cohn, Passel, & Gonzalez-Barbara, 2017). LDLs in particular have been found to often migrate alone or with other men with the singular purpose to serve as "breadwinners" for their families in country of origin (Negi, 2013). To this end, this ethnographic study seeks to examine the victimization experiences of LDLs, including types of victimization, and the psychological and social toll of such experiences in the new immigrant settlement city of Baltimore. Through thick qualitative description, we extend the literature by illuminating the intersection of structural vulnerability and violence with LDLs' health and health behaviors.

Method

Procedures

Ethnographic methods using adaptive sampling methodology with elements of field intensive outreach, Rapid Assessment for Response and Evaluation (RARE) methodology, and snow ball sampling were used in data collection which occurred from 2014 to 2015 (Trotter, Needle, Goosby, Bates, & Singer, 2001). Specifically, elements of RARE were used to identify and assess the presence of the target population. Field researchers initially conducted multiple field assessments at different times of

the day to note the key geographical areas where LDLs congregated to look for work. Field staff documented participant observations by day, time, and place (Needle et al., 2003). Based on these field assessments, two day labor sites were identified: a large home improvement store and a convenience store frequently used for pickups. These two sites were then used to identify, recruit, and qualitatively interview participants. The current study utilized data from a non-drug using subsample of LDLs ($n = 25$) that was part of a larger study on the health behaviors of LDLs in Baltimore ($N = 77$).

Latino day laborers that used illicit drugs were excluded from the study as engagement in the drug market has been shown to be associated with risky lifestyles and behaviors that may lead to higher risk of crime victimization (Daday, Broidy, Crandall, & Sklar, 2005; Lee & Schreck, 2005). Specifically, situational factors associated with drug use such as buying drugs or using drugs may lead to increased exposure to criminally involved networks that are above and beyond than those LDLs that use only alcohol (Valdez, Cepeda, Negi, & Kaplan, 2010).

The inclusion criteria for the study were as follows: male, 18 years of age or older, self-identified as being from a Latin American country, and currently residing in Baltimore, Maryland (at least 1 year) and working as a day laborer (at least 6 months). A survey was used to collect demographic characteristics on participants in the sample such as country of origin, length of time in the United States and Baltimore, number of years as a day laborer, immigration status, marital status, type of living arrangement, and whether they have been victims of employer, merchant, or police abuse. The survey also assessed alcohol use utilizing the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to assess for alcohol use behaviors and problems related to alcohol (Babor, de la Fuente, Saunders, & Grant, 1992). In-depth qualitative interviews in Spanish that lasted 1–1.5 hours each were then conducted at locations nearby to the day labor corners to ensure privacy. All interviews were audio recorded. Participants received \$10 cash for screening for recruitment and \$50 cash for the qualitative interview.

Research Ethics

All informed consent materials were read to participants verbatim in Spanish, and any participant questions were answered. Verbal consent was obtained from participants. The research procedures were approved by the University's Internal Review Board. There are no conflict of interest disclosures to report.

Analysis

Interview data from the non-drug user sample were transcribed and analyzed in source language: Spanish. After transcription, interview transcripts were uploaded into Dedoose, a mixed methods analysis software (Dedoose Version 8.0.35, 2018). Elements of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) were used in the analysis, including obtaining consensus and using a third-party auditor who was a Ph.D. level social science researcher not part of the data analytic team. The first strategy, item level analysis, involved careful line-by-line reading of the narrative data (text files) and unrestricted initial coding. Items and categories were developed through the process of “constant comparison.” Specifically, the research team compared categories and classifications across the interview data. In this process, more general categories emerged. During this initial process, item codes were tentative. The second strategy, pattern level of analysis, established linkages among the coded items, categories, and classifications. Item codes that were not considered by the research team to have utility to the research aims were excluded and coding focused on research questions. Based upon continuous dialogue with research members, selected codes were further collapsed or dropped from the analysis. The third strategy, structural level of analysis, organized the relationships among the elucidated patterns of the data (taxonomies or domains) into structures. At this step, the analysis reconstructed data into larger contextual constructs that account for the experiences of victimization of LDLs in Baltimore. The fourth strategy, interpretation, ascribed wider theoretical meaning to structures within theoretical framework of social ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The research team collaboratively defined emergent categories (i.e., being undocumented, limited or no access to the social safety net, structural racism) and their relationship to victimization based on social ecological theory. All members of the research team were involved in data analysis by coding data first separately and then jointly based on the latter definitions which were iteratively modified based on emergent data. Categories were then collapsed into themes based on theory and through discussion and consensus building. For example, being undocumented, limited or no access to social safety nets, structural racism, and lack of community integration became part of the larger category of “social alienation.” The third-party auditor provided feedback in cases where consensus could not be reached as well as helped reduce the potential of “group think” that can occur in team process. This feedback was discussed by the team and changes were made upon reaching consensus.

Once consensus regarding the qualitative codes was attained by the research team; the relationship between qualitative codes and quantitative demographic and work-related characteristics (i.e., age, length of time in the United States and working as a day laborer, country of origin, typical pay, typical remittances, AUDIT scores) were analyzed to assess for potential patterns in qualitative results. The Codes x Descriptor function was used in Dedoose, which displays the number of excerpts associated with a specific qualitative code for each indicated quantitative descriptor allowing for a cross-examination of the qualitative and quantitative data. For example, we looked at the relationship between qualitative codes (such as, victimization and desesperación) with quantitative data (such as, AUDIT scores). Results were presented and discussed among the research team members to further guide interpretation.

While data were analyzed in the source language, quotes used in this manuscript were back-translated to further ensure reliability and language equivalence (Brislin, 1970). Specifically, a native Spanish speaker from the research team first read the original Spanish version of the quotes. Then, this quote was literally translated into English with some grammatical corrections but maintaining the original meaning through understanding the context of the original quotes. A second Spanish speaker from the research team received the translated quotes and translated them back into Spanish. Both researchers compared the original Spanish version with the Spanish back-translation to check for both accuracy of the translation as well as the contextual meaning of these words. This was an iterative process until consensus between the researchers was reached on the language equivalence of the English translation.

Participants

All participants were foreign born men, with a majority from El Salvador (36%), Honduras (20%), Guatemala (16%), Mexico (16%), Peru (8%), and Ecuador (4%). The mean age of the participants was 41 years. Only one participant had a legal immigration status in the United States, while the remaining was undocumented. On average, participants had been in the United States for 8.64 years and 5.76 years in Baltimore, while their average time as a day laborer was 4.52 years. Men in the sample reported that on average, they had worked as day laborers for just under 5 years with an average pay of \$847 and send approximately \$365 in remittances to immediate and extended family in their country of origin in a typical month (See Table 1).

Table 1 Sample characteristics of Latino day laborers participants

Individual characteristics (<i>N</i> = 25)	% Mean (<i>SD</i>)
Country or origin	
El Salvador	36%
Honduras	20%
Guatemala	16%
Mexico	16%
Peru	8%
Ecuador	4%
Immigration status	
Undocumented	96%
Permanent resident	4%
Marital status	
Married	32%
Single	48%
Divorced/separated	16%
Living with girlfriend	4%
Age (years)	41.08 (7.62)
Years lived in the U.S.	8.64 (3.70)
Years lived in Baltimore	5.76 (3.27)
Years worked as a day laborer	4.52 (3.32)
Typical monthly earnings (month prior to survey)	847.20 (430.34)
Typical monthly remittances	365.62 (297.25)

Results

Settling into Baltimore

Many of the LDLs moved to Baltimore alone directly from their country of origin, though some moved from another city in the United States. All moved to Baltimore because they heard of work opportunities mostly through acquaintances or relatives already in the city. Settling down in this new city was described as a difficult task as they tried to find housing, look for work, navigate transportation systems, attempt to seek social support, and adequate services to assist their settlement process. LDLs rarely relied on local community organizations to help meet their settlement needs; in fact, most LDLs reported limited knowledge of available community-based support services. Their settlement experiences were overwhelming, steeped in challenges to find work and get by in a new city, while attempting to support family in their country of origin and fulfill their migration goals. A 33-year-old day laborer from El Salvador described,

In part, I am disillusioned to be here. I am also tired... Here life is exhausting. Well, for those of us who come from different countries, here everything is more exhausting. We came directly to work, to work, and to work, there is not a break for us, because we have a lot to do. We have, for example, to send money to our families, and then... also, we have to pay rent, we have to pay a lot of things, a lot of expenses... if we do not work, we will not cover the cost. If I do not pay my rent,

obviously, they will throw me out. Then, life here, for those of us who came from different countries to this country, it is a very agitated life, a life under pressure.

Many LDLs moved into low-income neighborhoods where they shared rooms or a house with others to offset the cost of living expenses. Less than a third of participants were married, and only half of those that were married lived with their wife in the United States. Only one lived with relatives and one with a female partner. Rather, most lived with other male roommates and two lived in a shelter or on the street. It was typical for men to share a living space with four or more people, and often in neighborhoods that they characterized as unsafe with high crime and violence on the streets.

Victimization

Overall, 72% of LDLs in the sample identified two broad types of victimization as highly pervasive and impactful in their lives: workplace and street level. Over a third of the sample (36%) experienced both forms of victimization, while 32% experienced only workplace victimization and 4% experienced only street-level victimization. Workplace victimization was identified by LDLs as abuse experienced within the context of work, perpetrated by contractor exploitation through no or little pay, harsh labor conditions, and deliberate abandonment at the job site. Street level victimization included violent physical abuse, assault, or robbery (See Table 2).

Workplace Victimization

The varying types of workplace victimization were categorized into four types: *wage theft*, *abandonment on the job site*, *poor labor conditions*, and *workplace verbal abuse*. While such various types of abuse were reported, often many co-occurred.

Almost every participant experienced some form of wage theft (i.e., denied wages for time worked or underpayment for that time) by an employer. Many spoke about leaving the day labor corner with a verbal agreement of payment with a contractor and after a long day of hard labor, either getting paid significantly lower than verbally agreed or many times not getting paid at all. One man, aged 32 from El Salvador noted,

I remember I went to shovel snow, he offered to pay me \$15 an hour, when we finished he paid us just \$8. I told him: “you can’t pay us \$8, it is \$15 an hour”; (contractor): “No, I never said that”... I worked 12 hours, without food, water, coffee, (in the) very cold.

Table 2 Victimization experiences of Latino day laborers (LDLs) in Baltimore

Domains	Themes	Sub-themes or definition	Relation to victimization
Types of Victimization	Workplace	Victimization that occurs on the jobsite 1. Wage theft 2. Abandonment 3. Verbal abuse 4. Labor conditions	
	Street level	Victimization that occurs on the streets and in the neighborhoods where LDLs live and work 1. Assault 2. Robbery	
Toll of victimization	Sociocultural alienation	LDLs described feeling socially disconnected and on the margins of society due to structural racism and racial tensions in neighborhood.	Experiences of victimization and structural racism led LDLs to feel as if they had no one to turn to for help, relief, or justice.
	Desesperación	Feelings of deep despair due to structural forms of oppression, individual hardships, and intense loneliness due to separation from family.	Experiences of victimization and limited social support led to desesperación.
	Alcohol Use and Abuse	Drinking socially or alone, ranging in frequency and intensity.	Drinking to self-medicate or to cope with victimization or desesperación linked to victimization

The experience of wage theft was often emotionally taxing as LDLs not only struggled to make ends meet for themselves but to also send remittances to support their families in their country of origin.

Abandonment on the job site or being left at a work site by an employer without the ability to return to the day labor corner was another major form of workplace victimization revealed within the study. LDL's explained the degrading instances of being left far from public transportation and having to walk many miles or having to call friends to pick them up after an employer would leave them at a work site. Often, abandonment at the work site also included wage theft. One 44-year-old man from Peru described being abandoned at a job site, "They left me stranded. I had to come back walking, I didn't have any money. I walked 15 miles, my foot hurt."

Latino day laborers also described working under poor labor conditions, including long working hours without breaks, food, or water in harsh weather conditions. They relayed that racism was a structural antecedent that not only led to such treatment but also the poor conditions of work itself. A 54-year-old man from Honduras who had worked as a day laborer in Baltimore for 5 years stated:

First of all, they are racists that treat us bad. For example, if they hire a Hispanic, they take him, but they pay him very little. They don't give him water or food.

Verbal abuse by employers was further reported and perceived as a deeply humiliating and denigrating experience. Many indicated that perhaps language barriers between LDLs and employers were a catalyst to misunderstandings, frustration, and inefficient communication within the employer–employee dynamic. However, others indicated that employer's racial animosity and disrespect for them as Latino workers prompted such humiliating treatment.

I mean, they think that the Latino is like a pack mule. Things they don't want to do they make the Hispanic people do them, and they pay them very little.

Others indicated that beyond racism, their positionality as *jornaleros*, or day laborers, segmented them even from other Latino immigrant workers with more stable jobs such as middlemen and contractors (*contratistas*). Many reported being taken advantage of by these men who were often viewed as distinct from *jornaleros* due to their English proficiency, position of authority, and social connectedness to mainstream networks and institutions. In fact, some participants described a preference for not working for Latino contractors because they were treated poorly and paid less in these instances.

Recently, I worked with a man from Mexico, and he had an assistant... he treated the assistant like trash... Verbally...yes. "Indio" he called him. "You don't

know anything.” “Help this guy here,” and he started to insult him.

Street Level Victimization

LDLs reported experiences of street level victimization in the forms of assault or robbery or a combination of both. A 44-year-old day laborer from Mexico relayed: “It is hard here. . . I don’t even walk. . . I don’t walk, because it is dangerous to walk.” Many viewed themselves as targets for robbery because of their race/ethnicity and because they are undocumented immigrant workers. A 31-year-old Honduran man who had been in Baltimore for 8 years relayed:

Here in Baltimore, there are too many assaults and stuff. I have seen it. I have seen Hispanic people being robbed, women and everything. . .

Characterizations of street-level victimization were often racialized with African Americans described as perpetrators that were perceived to be deliberately targeting *jornaleros* (day laborers). A 42-year-old Salvadoran day laborer who had lived in Baltimore for 2 years stated:

I have heard that they have killed. . . the Black people. Last time they hit a man, in his eye, it turned purple. His eye was almost closed, because some Black people came out to get him in the morning because he was on his way to the Seven (Eleven), they came out to get him on the street and hit him in his eye and almost blew out his eye because of the impact, and things like that I heard, people killing people. . .

Similarly, a 33-year-old LDL from El Salvador relayed:

I left the home where I live, and walking to the store, there were around 15 people there, those Black Americans. And when they saw me crossing to the other side of the street, avoiding confronting them, then like five of them crossed, they were behind me. . . they were following me until we were in an isolated place. One of them jumped me like this and punched me and hit me here, on the right side, asking me for my money.

Although some LDLs underscored the importance of not generalizing all African Americans as criminals, racial resentment and tensions with African Americans were a prominent theme in LDLs’ victimization narrative.

Reporting Crime

High levels of victimization were exacerbated by lack of or limited knowledge of where to report crime. Eighty

four percent of the participants indicated that they did not know how or where to report a crime. Moreover, some participants indicated that past negative interactions with police officers deterred them from comfortably reporting crime. A 29-year-old from Honduras who had been in the city for 7 years stated,

Sometimes there are police that are corrupt too. Depending on how the police look at you. It is difficult. Only with God’s will.

Most LDLs were fearful of any interactions with the police, let alone reporting crime. A 44-year-old day laborer from Peru explained how confusion between the police and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) led to further fear:

The thing is that the immigrant doesn’t want to ask for help from the police, due to the fear of being deported. They think that the police are immigration, they think that it is ICE, that if they go to the police it is like turning yourself in to the police to be deported, but they don’t know that they also have rights, even if they are undocumented.

The Toll of Victimization

Sociocultural Alienation

LDLs’ perceived their victimization as inextricably linked to their undocumented immigration status. The constraining nature of “illegality” imposed by their undocumented immigration status led many to experience deportation fear, prevented them from reporting crimes to the police and thereby, in their perception, perpetuated continued victimization. Further, lack of access to health insurance or medical treatment had significant impact on their experiences with street level victimization by complicating their ability to receive medical treatment for injuries resulting from violent victimization. One 47-year-old day laborer from Honduras described his experience receiving follow-up medical care after emergency surgery due to violent assault:

Look, this is an operation I had in the hospital. I almost lost this eye. . . Then a girl (a worker at the hospital) answered and told me: “Since you don’t have a police report, we can’t keep helping you.”

Without citizenship or work authorization and fear of the criminal justice system, LDLs continued to feel powerless, segmented into the margins of society, and despaired about a better future. A 42-year-old man from El

Salvador participant relayed, “. . .being undocumented and all that, not having good papers. I believe that limits the doors to a better future.”

LDLs’ experiences of structural racism were further complicated by racial tensions with African Americans. The historic Black neighborhoods that the LDLs moved into had high prevalence of crime but LDLs felt specifically targeted as Latino immigrant workers. Distrustful of their African American neighbors and feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, LDLs became hypervigilant, isolated, and alienated from their neighbors and society. In addition, LDLs relayed that they mainly socialized with other *jornaleros*. Rarely did they report socializing with other Latino immigrants including those who lived with families. One LDL described his housemates who also worked as *jornaleros* as his main source of socialization:

They like to work and be responsible. We work in different areas, you understand? We don’t work together. They have different types of work. One works with concrete. Another works in painting. And that way, almost constantly we see each other in the evenings or sometimes we don’t even see each other – each one in their own room. Sometimes we arrive (home) tired.

To this end, LDLs’ social networks were homogenous, mainly consisting of other LDLs, with weak to no ties to their neighborhood or the community that they lived in.

Desesperación

Many LDLs indicated that they lacked supportive and meaningful relationships in Baltimore which could serve to buffer the effects of victimization. Though participants often lived with other men and regularly socialized with other LDLs, few defined these relationships as emotionally or instrumentally supportive. LDLs relayed that these relationships lacked the type of support and deep connection that they experienced in their country of origin. Furthermore, separation from family in country of origin dislocated LDLs from traditional modes of social and familial support exacerbating feelings of *desesperación*. As one 32-year-old from El Salvador described:

Since I don’t have family here, I am living alone, just with people I know, sometimes due to loneliness, not having anyone, I feel alone. . . .

Notably, the longer LDLs were in the United States, the more they reported both experiences of victimization and feelings of *desesperación*. LDLs often migrated with

the goal of supporting their immediate and extended family (e.g., parents, children, partners, siblings) in country of origin through remittances; however, sending remittances was often difficult due to irregular and low wages. Of LDLs who identified feelings of *desesperación*, 78.6% indicated lack of work as one of the major reasons for not being able to send remittances. To this end, more years in the United States exacerbated the toll of hardship in the United States while prolonging separation from family in country of origin. One 54-year-old Honduran man described:

I couldn’t sleep last night. First, I dreamed about them (his children) when I left them. Now, lately I dream that they are grown up; because the youngest is 18 years old, close to 19. The oldest is 33. I didn’t see them grow up. I didn’t see them grow up. And I just dream about them, nothing else. They are calling out to me.

Such feelings of loneliness, longing, and feelings of failure associated to their role as breadwinners for their families in country of origin instigated deep feelings of despair. A 40-year-old from El Salvador who had lived in Baltimore for 8 years described, “. . .I am left with like a *desesperación* in the body. . . *desesperación*. Like as if one is choking and you want to breathe and you cannot.”

Alcohol Use

Over half of the LDLs in the sample ($n = 15$) were identified as having problem drinking based on an AUDIT score of 8 or higher (Babor et al., 1992). Thirteen LDLs reported binge drinking weekly (6 or more alcoholic beverages on one occasion). Some indicated potential alcohol dependency with five LDLs reporting that they were unable to do what was normally expected of them on a monthly basis or more because of drinking and three LDLs reporting that on a weekly occasion they were unable to stop drinking once they started.

Those who reported experiencing any form of victimization had an AUDIT score that was 1.6 times higher than those who did not report victimization (AUDIT score of 17.33 compared to 10.81). Scores above 16 on the AUDIT indicate high levels of alcohol problems, usually requiring some type of clinical counseling and monitoring (Babor, Higgins-Biddle, Saunders, & Monteiro, 2001). Men with the highest AUDIT scores reported even more instances of victimization than others, including street-level violent crime.

Seemingly, LDLs drank to self-medicate or to attenuate negative feelings associated with the hardships of their

lives. One 40-year-old day laborer from El Salvador relayed:

“I felt like depressed, I don’t know, not very calm. That is when I started to drink alcohol. Like alone. . .”

Discussion

This is one of the first studies to examine the toll of victimization on LDLs lives by investigating the intersection of structural vulnerability and violence with LDLs’ health and health behaviors in a new immigrant settlement city. LDLs in the study relayed experiencing both workplace and street-level victimization due to their socio-structural and environmental conditions. They further classified and described the impact of wage theft, abandonment at the jobsite, poor working conditions, verbal abuse, assault, and robbery on their lives. LDLs’ “illegality” as well as positionality as immigrant day laborers shaped their ability to navigate and deal with such experiences of victimization.

Baltimore’s shortage of public health and social resources to meet the needs of this undocumented, Spanish-speaking population left LDLs particularly vulnerable. Consequently, LDLs in the study often negotiated their own victimization experiences without access to a social service safety net. Such victimization experiences, contextualized by the structural conditions of their work and lives (e.g., restrictive immigration policies, poverty, racism, and living in a new immigrant settlement context), led to feelings of sociocultural alienation, *desesperación*, and problem drinking. Specifically, for LDLs far away from family and lacking strong instrumental relationships in the United States, victimization experiences further led them to feel alone and in despair. This is aligned to previous studies that have found that LDLs’ feelings of *desesperación* were exacerbated by their poor living conditions (measured as perceived safety, violence, loneliness, etc.) and separation from family (Letiecq, Grzywacz, Gray, & Eudave, 2014; Organista, Arreola, & Neilands, 2016, 2017). For some in our study, one way of coping with such feelings of *desesperación* included alcohol use. Unhealthy patterns of alcohol use were observed in over half of the sample, especially among those who reported victimization. This finding is particularly striking as those who experienced victimization had 1.6 times higher AUDIT scores than those in the study who did not. Previous studies have examined alcohol use among LDLs and have found drinking to cope with loneliness or sadness associated to family separation among this population (Negi, 2011; Organista, Arreola et al., 2017; Ornelas, Torres, & Serrano, 2016; Valdez et al., 2010); however, this

is one of the first studies, to our knowledge, to find this potential link with victimization. To this end, study results contribute to our sparse understanding of alcohol use among LDLs by offering insights regarding how victimization may play a role in problem drinking among this group.

Latino day laborers in the study often described feelings of sociocultural alienation in their communities tied to their undocumented immigration status, exacerbated by racial tensions and their status as *jornaleros* or day laborers. LDLs felt particularly targeted by their African American neighbors for street-level victimization but also felt alienated and victimized by other more established Latino immigrant workers. Such racialized perceptions of African Americans by LDLs must be further interrogated by community psychologists and social service providers as Latin America has a long history of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black policies and practices (Hernández, 2015), and male Latino immigrants have been found to hold negative views and stereotypes of African Americans (McClain et al., 2006). A national study of Latino immigration and robbery victimization also did not find any support to the notion that African Americans are targeting Latino immigrants for crime victimization (Barranco & Shihadeh, 2015). Simultaneously, it is important that community psychologists and social service providers be attuned to the role of super structural and structural level factors that limit LDLs’ access to citizenship and social safety nets forcing them to “turn inward for survival” in an effort to prevent exposure and deportation (Rodríguez, 2012, p.31). This is especially critical as rising national anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies have increased deportation fear and further inhibited access to social services and healthcare for this population; thereby, potentially exacerbating existing health disparities among this marginalized population (Page & Polk, 2017). In Maryland alone, since data for this study were collected, state police reports indicate that hate crimes against Latinos quadrupled from 2015 to 2016 (Barnes & Swalec, 2017). Such rising anti-immigrant sentiment and punitive policies underscore the important role that community psychologists and other advocates must play to best meet the needs of this underserved population that remains highly vulnerable, fearful, and underrepresented in surveillance data.

Significant outreach is needed to inform LDLs of their rights as workers and the resources available to prevent their further victimization. Community psychologists and social service providers should consider street-level outreach to build trust and inform LDLs of means of reporting and fighting cases of wage theft and other workers’ rights abuses. Social service organizations can also attenuate LDLs feelings of alienation by facilitating connection to their community and neighbors. It is important

that practitioners leverage the existing strengths of this population in developing programs and interventions. The results suggest that sending remittances to support family is an important goal of many LDLs as this may help fulfill their gender role expectation of “provider” or “breadwinner.” To this end, practitioners can develop programs or interventions that leverage the pride that LDLs feel in their ability to send money to support family members but also decrease the shame and stigma associated to being unable to do so. A men’s group that facilitates discussion regarding feelings associated with their work and life conditions may be beneficial and provide alternative non-gendered paradigms of providing support and maintaining connection to family. Such a group would encourage LDLs to share their experiences with other men who are in similar conditions as them thereby facilitating solidarity and support due to the commonality of their experiences. Social service organizations can also coordinate social activities such as soccer leagues, cultural festivals, and other social events that facilitate community connection and expansion of LDLs’ homogenous social networks. As previous research has found that LDLs often describe the day labor corner as a space that offers camaraderie and community membership (Turnovsky, 2006), such sites can also serve as critical meeting spaces for organizing, advocacy, and empowerment for immigrant and workers’ rights.

As crime reporting remains low among LDLs and other immigrants, law enforcement, particularly in sanctuary cities or welcoming cities like Baltimore, also have a role in building trust with this community through concerted outreach efforts that aim to dispel their connection with immigration enforcement. For example, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) met with over 150 immigrant communities in 2017 to communicate that the LAPD is not responsible for enforcing federal immigration laws and provided education on immigrant rights (Acros, 2017). Such trust-building efforts are likely to lead to better crime reporting among LDLs and minimization of vulnerability. In addition, non-policing alternatives must also be explored in the face of lack of trust in the police and/or other authorities by LDLs. Restorative justice models, such as the one proposed by Warner, Beck, and Ohmer (2010), that highlight relationship building among community residents to increase understanding of their previously unknown neighbors and building informal social capital and social support systems through community organizing, could be one important strategy. It is critical to acknowledge that while these environmental and individual level interventions may be ameliorative, without immigration reform or a pathway to legalization for those who are undocumented in the United States, there will remain an underclass of immigrants who do not share the

same rights and opportunities as citizens and who continue to be vulnerable to crime and victimization.

Although this study contributes to the dearth of understanding of the lived experiences of LDLs, there are various limitations to study results. The reliability of our results could have been compromised as participants may have felt apprehensive disclosing details related to their alcohol use due to deportation fear. To minimize the impact of such factors on the reliability of our results, the research team built various trust-building strategies with LDLs, including extensive fieldwork to build comfort and rapport with the study population. Further, the credibility of our results could have been impacted by the research team’s preconceptions. Our use of a third-party “auditor,” not part of the research team, helped further the trustworthiness of our results by examining the credibility of the study’s process and product (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Despite such limitations, this study contributes to the literature by moving forward our understanding of LDLs’ experiences of victimization and its consequences.

Future research should expand the exploration of LDLs’ victimization experiences to other non-traditional immigrant cities to better understand whether our current results can be substantiated in other similar contexts. Furthermore, we recommend the further exploration of the intriguing link between victimization and alcohol misuse among LDLs. As political rhetoric and policies continue to portray male undocumented Latino immigrant workers as criminals, it is critical that researchers further explore and amplify the lived experiences of this population to ensure more research-informed social and public strategies to reduce victimization. This is salient as our results indicate that LDLs’ marginality and lack of access to social protections heightens risk for victimization and exacerbates its consequences on social and psychological well-being.

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