

Day Laborers and Occupational Stress: Testing the Migrant Stress Inventory With a Latino Day Laborer Population

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Although day laborers are likely to suffer from high rates of work-related stress, there are no survey measures that focus on stress among this occupational group. Accordingly, we tested the validity and reliability of the Migrant Stress Inventory (MSI), a scale originally designed for migrant farmworkers. Based on survey data collected from day laborers ($N = 102$) in two Northern California communities, the MSI was found to have adequate internal consistency, yet additional analyses indicated a different factor structure for the subscales. New subscales (relationships, communication, alcohol and other drug use, years in the United States, age, deportation concerns, discrimination experience) with this sample had strong reliability, as well as construct validity. In all, 57.8% of day laborers experienced high rates of stress, and factor analysis differentiated four stressor domains: instability, relationships, communication, and alcohol and other drug use. Moreover, 39.2% of respondents reported lifetime difficulties with alcohol, although alcohol difficulties were not associated with stress. Implications for further research are discussed based on these findings.

Keywords: day laborers, stress, Latino, alcohol problems, scale development

Although day laborers constitute a highly visible component of the informal economy, little is known about occupational stress among this population. However, the particular job seeking and working conditions of these laborers place them at particular risk. As a temporary, highly mobile, low-wage workforce who are frequently the targets of discrimination, and who are placed in the position of competing with one another for work, day laborers are likely to suffer from significantly higher levels of stress-related problems than the general population. For example, work-related stressors like job insecurity (Pelfrene et al., 2003; Rocha, Hause Crowell, & McCarter, 2006; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002; Wang, 2004; Waters, 2007) and negative working conditions (Edimansyah et al., 2008; Plaisier et al., 2007) are likely to particularly affect day laborers, because those job characteristics are common to these workers. Last, in the context of recent research linking work stressors and social inequality (House & Williams, 2003; Landsbergis, Schnall, Pickering, Warren, & Schwartz, 2003; Siegrist & Marmot, 2004), the current xenophobic climate in the United States and the discrimination against immigrants that engenders, may also be a significant source of stress for day laborers.

Published research examining occupation-related stress among this population has been notably meager, however, attributable in

part to the absence of valid assessment tools. To that end, we tested with a sample of day laborers a modification of an existing measure of occupational stress that was originally developed for a demographically similar laboring population, namely migrant farmworkers. The Migrant Farmworker Stress Inventory (MFWSI) is a 39-item, self-report measure developed by one of the authors to assess the quality and severity of stress associated with a migrant farmworkers (Hovey, 2001). The initial scale was developed from qualitative interview data with over one hundred migrant farmworkers (Magaña & Hovey, 2003). These data exhaustively documented stressors associated with the farmworker lifestyle and elucidated the ways in which these workers cope with them. The resulting scale assesses both stressor exposure and severity of stress. Participants rate each stressor that they have experienced on a 4-point scale (“not at all stressful” to “extremely stressful”).

Given research suggesting that some day laborers may be susceptible to alcohol-related problems (Organista & Ehrlich, 2008; Organista & Kubo, 2005; Ritieni, Quesada, Gilbreath, & Kral, 2007; Walter, Bourgois, Loinaz, & Schillinger, 2002; Worby & Organista, 2007), we also examined the relationships between stress and problematic drinking behaviors. The principal goals of this article, therefore, are threefold: (1) to assess the reliability of a modified version of the MFWSI, referred to here as the Migrant Stress Inventory (MSI), for the day laborer population; (2) to replicate the subscales of the original MFWSI; and (3) to assess the construct validity of the MSI subscales. Drawing from survey data collected from day laborers ($N = 102$) in Northern California, our findings are the first, to our knowledge, to assess mental health issues among this occupational group.

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Day Laborer Population

Despite being the focus of often-heated debates regarding labor, immigration, and the growing presence of Latinos throughout the United States, there is not a universally accepted definition of day laborers. Indeed, neither the Department of Labor nor the Department of the Census recognizes day labor as an official occupational classification. Nonetheless, working definitions of day labor tend to emphasize two components: (a) day laborers work for multiple employers and are paid on a daily basis; and (b) most solicit work from public spaces or, increasingly, from specially designated hiring sites (U.S. General Accounting Office [U.S. GAO], 2002). The most thorough demographic description of day laborers to date stems from a nationally administered Day Labor Survey carried out by Valenzuela and colleagues (Valenzuela, 2000; Valenzuela, Theodore, Melendez, & Gonzalez, 2006), who estimate that on any given day approximately 117,600 day laborers are either looking for work or employed for the day. The vast majority (98%) are men and most arrived in the United States during the past 4 years from Latin America, particularly Mexico (59%) and Central America (28%). Many traveled to the United States without their spouses and children and send their meager surplus income to them in the form of remittances. Day laborers can be found throughout the United States, although the heaviest concentration (42%) resides in the Western United States. Unlike farmworkers, with whom they share certain demographic and migratory characteristics, day laborers tend to live in urban centers or in their surrounding suburbs. While some workers engage in day labor to supplement their income from other employment, a full 83% of Valenzuela's sample relied on day-labor work as their sole source of income.

Most day laborers are hired by homeowners/renters or contractors in the construction and landscape industries. Although 46% of workers earned between \$10.00 and \$11.99/hour in 2004, median monthly earnings were only \$700, because of the challenges of finding steady work, the illegal withholding of earned wages by employers, and the high rate of workplace injury among this population. The occupational health of day laborers is also a significant cause of concern (Buchanan, 2004; Pransky et al., 2002; Schur, Burk, Good, & Gardiner, 1999; U.S. GAO, 2002; Walter et al., 2002). Rates of injury among these workers are high, with one in five reporting that they have suffered an injury on the job. Of those, 67% subsequently missed work due to their injuries (Walter et al., 2002).

As a consequence of their economic conditions, coupled with the tendency of these workers to periodically send money to family members in their home communities, many of these workers dwell in cramped, substandard housing with other single men, or suffer from high rates of homelessness (Walter et al., 2002). Possibly reflecting their familial and social isolation, coupled with work-related stressors and cultural norms regarding alcohol use, some of these workers are prone to engage in episodic heavy drinking (Organista, 2008; Organista & Kubo, 2005; Ritieni et al., 2007).

Day laborers share a number of demographic and work-related features—and their accompanying stressors—with migrant farmworkers. Both constitute a contingent manual labor force whose ranks consist largely of Latino men from Mexico and Central America and who work for employers for brief periods of time. Like farmworkers, a substantial number of day laborers live apart

from their families and send money to them in the form of remittances. Finally, the living and working conditions of both groups, including substandard housing, high rates of occupational injury, and the need to migrate to obtain work, are likewise similar.

Although there are notable similarities between the day laborer and farmworker lifestyles, there are important differences that may affect their mental health. Day laborers, for example, are much more likely than farmworkers to live in urban centers and may consequently be more likely to be victims of crime (Walter et al., 2002). Furthermore, day laborers' approaches to job seeking are different, and their soliciting work from street corners and other public settings may make them a greater target of prejudice, community anxiety, or harassment by the authorities (Buchanan, 2004; Pransky et al., 2002; Schur et al., 1999; U.S. GAO, 2002; Valenzuela et al., 2006; Walter et al., 2002; Worby, 2007). Last, work acquired by day laborers is more diverse and of much shorter duration than that of farmworkers, often lasting no more than a few days. The brief duration of work and the uncertainty of when a job may end may likewise result in layoff-related stress.

Project Overview

Given the absence of existing measures of day laborer stress, and mindful of both the similarities and differences between these two occupational groups, the research team set out to test whether a modified version of the MFSI would be suitable for the day laborer population. The resulting scale will be incorporated into a larger, mixed-method project examining the relationship between stress, anxiety, and depression among day laborers. Because work-related stress is associated with hypertension and coronary heart disease, among other impairments, it is critically important to understand the prevalence, causes, and consequences of stress among this population, as well as the particular stressors inherent in day labor activities that contribute to poor behavioral health.

Method

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

Data were obtained from an opportunity sample of 102 day laborers conducted via outreach at job seeking assistance and social service centers at two sites in the San Francisco Bay Area in northern California, a region with a substantial number of day laborers. Reflecting the demographics of this population overall, the sample was entirely male and Latino, with 42.2% of Mexican origin, 50% of Guatemalan origin, and 4.9% Other, the latter deriving from El Salvador and Honduras. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 78 years ($M = 34.0$, $SD = 11.8$).¹ The percentage of Central American day laborers is substantially higher than the 28% reported in the National Day Labor Survey (Valenzuela et al., 2006), reflecting the prevalence of Guatemalan workers in the Bay Area's informal labor market (Worby, 2007).

Potential participants were recruited through several methods. First, outreach workers from a community-based organization that

¹ Although all participants were screened to ensure that they were at least 18 years old, one respondent marked his age as 17 years old on the survey form.

provides social services to day laborers distributed informational flyers and discussed the project with workers at job-seeking sites (street corners, hiring halls, parking lots, etc.), informing them of the purpose of the study and the location where the interviews would be administered. Second, the interview sessions were conducted during times and locations where day laborers receive a weekly free lunch. Inclusion criteria were self-identifying as a day laborer (*jornalero* in Spanish), age 18 years or older, and fluency in Spanish.

All surveys were in Spanish and were administered on three separate occasions. Given the time limitation for carrying out this pilot study, the surveys were administered in group settings. Because of concerns about the functional literacy of the population, each survey item, and its corresponding response categories, was read aloud by a trained facilitator. In addition, two to three cofacilitators were on hand to reread or clarify survey questions for individual respondents who required additional assistance. Prior to participating, consent forms were distributed, and their contents read aloud by the facilitator. These forms were initialed by those wishing to participate, and returned to the facilitator. We obtained human subjects approval for these procedures from the institutional review board of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. Surveys averaged 25 to 35 min to complete. Each respondent was given a \$25 incentive to participate.

Measures

General demographic information about the background characteristics and current living circumstances were collected. Participants were asked about the amount of time they have lived in the United States, current living accommodations, homelessness, and separation from family members. They were also asked about their current working situation and their financial responsibility to any family members in their home country.

As described earlier, a key component of the research was to test the validity of the MSI, which itself was based on a scale (the MFWSI), developed by one of the coauthors to measure work-related stress among migrant farmworkers. Items in the original scale were constructed in English, translated into Spanish, and subsequently compared with comments and themes identified in the in-depth interviews from which the scales were drawn. Finally, the scales were back-translated into English. The Spanish translation and back-translation were carried out separately by two masters-level students who were native Spanish speakers familiar with Mexican Spanish (Magaña & Hovey, 2003). The original scale has been found to have adequate internal consistency, reliability, and construct validity in migrant farmworkers (Grzywacz et al., 2006; Hovey, 2001).

Because we wished not only to test the scale's validity with day laborers, but to explore the possibility of a common measure in which both farmworker and day laborer stress (and, by extension, the stress of other low-socioeconomic status Latino laboring populations) may be obtained and subsequently compared, modifications to the original scale were kept to a minimum. These changes consisted of eliminating references to farmworkers and/or replacing that occupational term with "day laborer" on four items. For example, the item from the original scale that read, "Because of the physical nature of farm work, I have health problems" was changed to "Because of the physical nature of my work, I have

health problems". In addition, for one item pertaining to the conditions of restrooms, we added a phrase to emphasize that we were referring to those conditions at work, rather than in workers' barracks ("Sometimes I feel that the conditions of the bathrooms at work are bad").

We measured alcohol dependence using the CAGE/4M, the Spanish translation of the CAGE, a widely used, 4-item screening tool for assessing alcohol dependence and misuse as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV)*. The CAGE 4/M has been found to be valid with Spanish-speaking Latino groups in the United States (Cher-pitel, 1999; Saitz, Lepore, Sullivan, Amaro, & Samet, 1999).

Missing data. After accounting for structurally missing data, no items had more than 15% missing. Slightly less than half the participants (48%) were missing at least one item. Analysis of missing data among stress inventory questions revealed items missing completely at random among those who had responded (Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test $\chi^2[1591] = 1516.5, p = .91$). The expectation-maximization (EM) estimation procedure in SPSS 15.0 for Windows was used to impute values for participants who were missing on individual items and who did not have structurally missing data.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Participants reported a wide range of years living in the United States, from less than 1 year to 23 years ($M = 4.6$ years, $SD = 4.53$). Just more than three-quarters (78.4%) reported speaking Spanish growing up, with the remaining 20% reporting indigenous languages (most frequently reported were Mam, Q'anjob'al, Kakchiquel, and Popti'/Western Jacalteco). Over half reported being married or living as married (55.9%). However, only 26% of these currently were living with their partners. Those not living with their spouses reported a range of less than 1 year to 10 years living apart ($M = 2.64$ years, $SD = 2.64$). Slightly more than half ($n = 54, 52.9%$) had children under the age of 18. Of these, 38 participants reported having children living in the United States, and 44 reported having children living in their home countries. Participants reported usually working an average of 15.0 hours a week, though the average for the previous week was slightly lower at 12.8. The average weekly income was reported as \$145. Approximately one-quarter (25.5%) considered themselves homeless at some time during the last year. Participants reported living with an average of 3.6 other people, with a range of zero to nine. Finally, lifetime difficulties with alcohol were prevalent, with 39.2% having a positive CAGE score, indicated by responding positively to more than one of the four items.

MSI

With this sample, reliability for the scale taken as a whole was very similar ($\alpha = .91$) to other reports of this measure with migrant farm worker populations (Grzywacz et al., 2006; Kim-Godwin & Bechtel, 2004). The MSI has 39 items, and scores range from 0 (*have not experienced*) to 4 (*extremely stressful*), so that the final score as a sum of all responses has a range from 0 to 156. The overall mean score with this sample was 83.5 (range = 29 to 138,

$SD = 24.1$), just over the 80-point score for “caseness” as determined by Kim-Godwin and Bechtel (2004). Just over half (57.8%) had a sum score for the stress inventory over 80. Using Kim-Godwin and Bechtel’s levels of stress, in this study we found 31.4% as “somewhat” stressed (mean scores = 80–100), 19.6% as “moderately” stressed (mean scores = 100–120), and 6.9% as “extremely stressed” (mean scores >120). Using the threshold from the scale’s authors of items with a sample mean greater than 2.5, 12 items were rated as more stressful (see Table 1).

The total sum score for the MSI was found to be related to several background variables. Men who reported being married or living as married had higher mean scores than those who were not, 90.8 vs. 74.3, $t(100) = -3.65$, $p < .01$, Cohen’s $d = -0.73$, and those who have children under the age of 18 were significantly more stressed than those without, 92.0 vs. 74.0, $t(100) = -4.03$, $p < .01$, Cohen’s $d = -0.81$. No other background items were found to be correlated with MSI score.

Factor Analyses

We were unable to use confirmatory factor analytic methods to test the applicability of this scale to our population, as such an approach would require, at minimum, 5 cases per variable ($5 \times 39 = 195$ participants). Given the current sample size, we employed the analytic strategies used by the original authors (Hiott, Grzywacz, Davis, Quandt, & Arcury, 2008) to see whether we could replicate the factor structure previously found. Principal components analysis with Varimax rotation was used on all 39 items. Initial analyses were done to assess the factorability of the data for analytic procedures. This included two tests. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was noted as significant, $\chi^2(91) = 424.66$, $p < .01$, indicating a good fit for factor analysis. The sample size for this research is deemed acceptable because the ratio of participants to variables is not extremely high, and Bartlett’s test is overly sensitive with large datasets. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling was found to be within the acceptable range (.74) to be considered for factor analysis. KMO values of .60 and above are required for factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

The first analysis indicated the presence of 12 factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Item groupings were assessed for

conceptual and face validity by the research team. All factors with only one item were deleted. We also used Hiott’s criteria that items had to load $\geq .55$ on the primary factor and $< .40$ on any other factor. The resulting factor structure was reassessed using 14 items on four factors explaining 61.7% of the variance (see Table 2). The four factors were named by the research team based on the latent factor the items seemed to represent. They included: instability (5 items), indicating housing and relational volatility; relationships (3 items), related to stress regarding children and romantic partner; communication (4 items), indicative of issues with speaking to others in English or confiding in people; and alcohol and other drug (AOD) exposure (2 items), related to issues of other peoples’ drug or alcohol use. Two individual items were removed from the factor analysis but were chosen as issues to be treated as single items in further analyses (“I worry about being deported” and “I have experienced discrimination in this country”), because discrimination and fear of deportation have been shown to be significant sources of stress among undocumented workers in the United States (Cohen, 2004; Duke & Gómez Carpentiero, 2008; García, 2004; Grzywacz et al., 2006; Walter et al., 2002).

Reliability. Internal consistency was assessed for each of the subscales separately, using Cronbach’s alpha for scales with at least three items and Pearson’s r for scales with only two items. The internal reliabilities for each subscale were: instability ($\alpha = .77$), relationships ($\alpha = .82$), communication ($\alpha = .66$), and AOD ($r = .47$).

Construct validity of MSI subscales. Correlations were used to test the relationship between the subscales and the subscales with background variables. Subscales on the MSI were significantly, though not strongly, correlated with each other ($r = .26$ – $.36$; see Table 3), with the exception of AOD use and relationship stress. In addition, scale scores were correlated with continuous background variables. Communication stress was significantly negatively correlated with years living in the United States ($r = -.39$) and age ($r = -.26$), such that increased stress was related to fewer years in the United States and younger respondents. Worry about deportation was significantly correlated with instability ($r = .33$), communication ($r = .26$), and AOD use ($r = .31$) stress. Experience of discrimination was also significantly correlated with instability ($r = .28$) stress.

In addition, independent t tests were conducted with dichotomous background variables. Men who reported being or living as married had significantly higher average scores on Instability (2.21 vs. 1.78; $t = -2.35$, $p < .05$, Cohen’s $d = -0.47$) and relationship (2.48 vs. 0.84; $t = -7.08$, $p < .01$, Cohen’s $d = -0.58$) stress. Similarly, men who reported having children under the age of 18 had significantly higher average scores on Instability (2.20 vs. 1.82; $t = -2.00$, $p < .05$, Cohen’s $d = -0.40$) and relationship (2.70 vs. 0.70; $t = -10.20$, $p < .01$, Cohen’s $d = -2.01$) stress. (As expected, these two background items were strongly correlated, $r = .75$.) In addition, those who reported having experienced homelessness reported significantly higher mean scores on Instability (2.38 vs. 1.91; $t = -2.22$, $p < .05$, Cohen’s $d = -0.50$) stress. No group differences were found on scale scores between those who had a positive CAGE score and those who did not.

Table 1
Scores for All Items With >2.5 Means

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
It is difficult to be away from family members	3.27	1.08
Sometimes I have difficulty finding a job	3.25	0.92
Migrating to this country was difficult	3.24	1.09
I worry about not having a permit to work in this country	3.10	1.29
I worry about being deported	3.05	1.31
I worry about not having medical care	2.89	1.21
At times I have not been able to buy things that I want because I make little money	2.67	1.25
It bothers me that other people use drugs	2.62	1.42
I sometimes worry because I do not have reliable transportation	2.60	1.30
I have difficulty understanding other people when they speak English	2.59	1.29
It is difficult to be away from friends	2.53	1.32

Table 2
Final Factor Loadings for Day Laborer Stress Inventory

Item	Factor loading	Rotated eigenvalue	% of variance	Cronbach's α or r
Instability				
Because of working as a day laborer, sometimes I do not feel settled (that I am often on the move)	.79	4.00	28.34	.77
Because I feel isolated, I find it hard to meet people	.74			
Sometimes I have difficulty finding a place to live	.70			
Sometimes I feel that my housing is inadequate	.65			
There are no stores nearby	.62			
Relationships				
I worry about my children's education	.87	1.85	13.24	.82
I worry about who my children are spending time with	.86			
I worry about my relationship with my partner	.75			
Communication				
I have difficulty understanding other people when they speak English	.78	1.67	11.92	.66
Sometimes I have difficulty communicating in the English language	.69			
It is difficult to be away from friends	.55			
I find it difficult to talk about my feelings to other people	.50			
AOD use				
It bothers me that other people use drugs	.86	1.15	8.18	.47
It bothers me that other people drink too much alcohol	.70			
Total variance explained			61.69	

Note. AOD = alcohol and other drug. Items failing to load at least .40 on only one factor: I have to work in bad weather; There are not enough Spanish radio or television shows in this area; Because of the physical nature of my work, I have health problems; At times I have not been able to buy things that I want because I make little money; I worry about not having medical care; At times I have to work long hours; It is difficult to be away from family members; I have had to adjust to the different foods in this country; I have been taken advantage of by my employer, supervisor, or landlord; Sometimes I don't feel at home; I worry about not having a permit to work in this country; There is not enough water to drink when I am working; Because of my work, I do not have time to get things done outside of work; My life has become more difficult because my partner is not with me; I sometimes worry because I do not have reliable transportation; I have experienced discrimination in this country; Sometimes I have difficulty finding a job; I worry about being deported; Migrating to this country was difficult; Sometimes I feel that the conditions of the bathrooms (at work) are bad; I have been physically or emotionally abused by my partner; It is difficult to complete the paperwork necessary to receive social services; I do not get enough credit from other family members for the work I do.

Discussion

Reliability and Face Validity of the MSI for the Day Laborer Population

The MSI, originally designed for migrant farmworkers, was found to have sufficient internal reliability and face validity with this population. This finding suggests that the scale would be applicable to similar populations (i.e., immigrant manual laborers) working in other occupational settings. The ability to use this scale for different groups of workers is of great importance, as it will facilitate the comparison of stressors across occupational domains.

However, one of the strengths of the original scale is its specificity to the migrant farmworker population, which implies the need to tailor certain questions for particular occupational milieu. In the current study, for example, none of the four resulting factors was specific to the workplace, nor to particular occupational influences; rather, the factors correspond to low income Latino migrant populations more generally. These factor loadings stand in contrast to those where the original scale was used in farmworker research, where working conditions (e.g., "There is not enough water to drink when I am working") emerged as a factor, along with legality and logistics; social isolation; family; and substance

Table 3
Correlations Between Subscale Scores and Demographics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Instability	—							
2. Relationships	.26*	—						
3. Communication	.31*	.36*	—					
4. AOD use	.27*	.10	.39*	—				
5. Years in United States	-.05	-.13	-.39*	-.10	—			
6. Age	-.09	.15	-.26*	-.15	.38*	—		
7. Worry about deportation	.33*	.19	.26*	.31*	-.08	-.08	—	
8. Experience of discrimination	.28*	.10	.14	.06	.20*	.04	.19	—

Note. AOD = alcohol and other drug.

* $p < .05$.

abuse by others (Hiott et al., 2008; Kim-Godwin & Bechtel, 2004). Subsequent research with day laborers, therefore, should incorporate additional questions drawn from ethnographic research that are specific to the stressors of these workers. Moreover, the instrument includes several questions regarding romantic partners and dependent children, despite the fact that day laborers may be less likely than farmworkers to consider themselves married or to be parents. For example, Valenzuela et al.'s national sample of day laborers found that 43% were either married or living with a partner (Valenzuela et al., 2006), whereas 68% of Hiott et al.'s farmworker sample were married or living as married (Hiott et al., 2008). Taking account of these group differences, either in the survey design or analysis (e.g., adjusting the threshold for caseness for respondents who are unmarried and/or have no dependent children) requires further psychometric research, to reflect better the demographic characteristics of day laborers.

Stressors Facing Day Laborers

The data described above clearly indicate some of the enormous challenges faced by day laborers, and correspond with Walter and colleagues' qualitative work among this population (Walter et al., 2002). Many married respondents had spent a considerable length of time apart from their spouses and children. Moreover, respondents' weekly income was well below subsistence wages for an expensive region like the San Francisco Bay Area, which no doubt contributes to the fact that approximately one fourth of the sample considered themselves to be homeless during the previous year. A substantial number also experienced lifetime difficulties with alcohol, which likely affected their ability to obtain employment and have access to adequate shelter. Our findings likewise correspond to the literature on problem drinking among this population (Organista, 2008; Organista & Kubo, 2005; Ritieni et al., 2005; Walter et al., 2002).

The factor loadings revealed constellations of stressors that are to some extent consistent with those of other Latino migrant workers (see Table 2). Instability related to housing and social isolation has been widely reported among farmworker populations (Duke & Gómez Carpentiero, 2008; García, 2004; Hovey, 2001; Hovey & Seligman, 2006). Moreover, relationship stress pertaining to respondents' romantic partners and children likewise is consistent with other studies of male Latino migrant laborers (Duke & Gómez Carpentiero, 2008; Gómez Carpentiero & Duke, 2008). For those raising children in the United States, particularly in economically distressed communities, it is perhaps not surprising that respondents would be concerned with their children's education and social influences. For workers whose families reside abroad, these stressors reflect workers' diminished influence over their families in general, and their children in particular (Grzywacz et al., 2006). However, whether their families reside with them or remain in their country of origin, living up to their role as provider in the context of erratic work availability, low pay and exploitation by employers contributes to these workers' stress. The third factor, Communication, comprises a constellation of stressors that, like Instability, reflects the social isolation of this population; lack of English language facility isolates them from the larger society, while their separation from friends and other intimate acquaintances makes the challenges of the day labor lifestyle all the more difficult. Exposure to others' alcohol and other drug use emerged

as the last stress factor. This likely reflects the fact that many workers have a history of homelessness or live in economically distressed neighborhoods, where problem drinking behaviors and illicit drug use may be carried out in public. Concern over others' drinking may also reflect the heavy drinking that can occur in dwellings occupied by high numbers of male workers (Duke & Gómez Carpentiero, 2008; García, 2004).

Reported lifetime difficulties with alcohol were also high among this population. It is notable, however, that those who scored positively on the CAGE did not have elevated MSI subscale scores, suggesting that problem drinking behaviors may be associated with stress outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression) rather than on the stressors themselves. The findings also reflect the absence of a consistent relationship between work-related stressors and problem drinking in the literature (see Frone, 2004).

This study has several limitations. First, an opportunity sample was used, and the sample size was fairly modest ($N = 102$). Moreover, because participants were drawn from laborers who had found no work on the days in which the survey was administered, they may have been less successful in obtaining regular work than other day laborers. Because the study was cross sectional, we were unable to ascertain the directionality of stress as it pertains to the background variables or responses to the CAGE. Finally, the administration of the surveys in a group setting with a low literacy population may have diminished the accuracy of the data, despite the fact that a trained facilitator read each question aloud, and two to three additional administrators were on hand to assist individual respondents in completing the questions.

Despite these limitations, this paper makes an important contribution to the literature on migrant labor populations in that it is the first to examine the behavioral health of day laborers. The findings, therefore, contribute to the broader literature on work and stress, particularly in regards to workers in the informal economy. They should also provide valuable information, not only to mental health service providers, but to housing and labor advocates, day laborer hiring site administrators, and social service representatives, who may use them to design targeted, culturally appropriate interventions addressing the needs of these workers.

Further research is needed, however, to assess the relationship of stress to other facets of day laborers' mental health, including anxiety, depression, and other impairments. Future research also should examine the relationship between stress and unhealthy substance using behaviors, such as tobacco use, problem drinking, and illicit drug use. Given day laborers' high visibility while soliciting work, the prejudice directed toward this population in many communities in the United States, and the overall high levels of stress that they face, it is all the more urgent to engage in applied research that addresses the mental health issues of this poorly understood laboring population.

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