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The University of San Francisco

COPING BEHAVIORS OF DAY LABORERS  
IN SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
the Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Antonio Gallardo  
San Francisco  
May 2012

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
Dissertation Abstract

Coping Behaviors of Day Laborers in San Mateo, California

Before this study, little research existed on the coping behaviors of day laborers. To bolster the research in this area, my study explored the coping behaviors of day laborers. My participants were 12 Latin American day laborers from Guatemala and Mexico who, at the time of the study, lived in San Mateo, California. I used a qualitative approach for my study and gathered information on how my participants coped with the day-to-day experiences of day labor life. This involved background interviews, stressor questionnaires, group interviews, in-depth individual interviews, and a follow-up to the stressor questionnaire.

This study revealed that participants experienced the following stressors: lack of English, lack of employment/low income, family separation, lack of medical care, and fear of deportation. The study also showed that participants coped with these stressors using the following coping strategies: relying on friends, taking active control, passive acceptance, keeping a positive attitude, and faith in God. The research revealed a vulnerable group with limited resources. My study concludes with recommendations for municipal, state, and federal policy makers as well as recommendations for future research in the following areas: sample and timeframe, family separation, border crossing, perception studies, quantitative and qualitative case studies.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

<u>Antonio Gallardo</u> _____	<u>April 17, 2012</u> Date
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Dissertation Committee

<u>Dr. Stephen Cary</u> _____ Chairperson	<u>April 17, 2012</u> Date
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<u>Dr. Emma Fuentes</u> _____ Second Reader	<u>April 17, 2012</u> Date
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<u>Dr. Lois Lorentzen</u> _____ Third Reader	<u>April 17, 2012</u> Date
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I am especially indebted to the study's 12 participants whose information and time was absolutely invaluable in ensuring the success of this dissertation. With their constant feedback as well as their wisdom, they represent the bedrock of this dissertation and ensured its completion.

I also give thanks to my sons Collin and Gabriel for giving me the constant source of inspiration, wherewithal and foresight to continue when things were difficult. Their lives continually kept me serious, responsible, and focused.

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To my friends and loved ones who continually believed in me and gave me the necessary support to see this entire process through.

And finally, to my mother, Trinidad who as a single mother toiled in the fields of California resisting racism and abuse to ensure that her son had a fighting chance in this world. Although she does not know the concept of a dissertation and does not speak

English, she does know that her sacrifices weren't for naught. This dissertation is dedicated to her.

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## **Chapter I**

### **The Research Problem**

#### **Introduction**

In cities across California, groups of Latino immigrant men gather each morning outside of home improvement stores, moving van rental companies, and street corners looking for temporary work in construction, painting, moving, landscaping, or other types of strenuous and often dangerous manual labor scorned by many Americans.

Construction contractors and homeowners hire these day laborers for stints that last from a few hours to a few days. Once these short-term jobs end, these workers return to the street and repeat the process over again, often searching for work seven days a week (Valenzuela, Theodore, Melendez, & Gonzalez, 2006). Because the vast majority of these men come to the U.S. undocumented, their immigration status often puts them at the mercy of unscrupulous employers in an informal labor market that has few safeguards in place for their protection. Subject to employer abuses such as wage theft, abandonment at job sites, or verbal and physical abuse, these men also must contend with harassment from local merchants, the police, and sometimes organized anti-migrant groups of whites (Cleaveland & Kelly, 2008).

Laborers from Mexico have a long history of heading North to the U.S. in search of better economic opportunities. After the revolution in 1910 in Mexico, migrant laborers first started to come to the fields of California in large numbers to cultivate and harvest crops. The farmers needed cheap labor, and impoverished Mexicans needed work. This labor became integral to the American economy. In 1942, the United States government in cooperation with the Mexican government began to regulate the influx of

these migrant workers to ensure uninterrupted farm production while the country's energies geared up for the war effort (Galarza, 1964). The Bracero Program ("bracero" literally means "arms") continued for over two decades, and oversaw the immigration of 4 million Mexican migrant workers to the U.S. (Michel, 2008). Although the U.S. government officially ended the Bracero Program in 1964, immigration from Mexico continued. By 1986, Congress had set up a commission to study ways to stop or at least slow down the growing illegal migration from Mexico (Bacon, 2008). The numbers of immigrants coming to the U.S., however, have not abated.

Due to economic forces outside of their control, millions of citizens from Latin American countries are forced northward. For example, developing countries look to the developed ones for economic support by way of loans from organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. When the developing countries cannot repay these loans due to exorbitant interest rates and continued irresponsible borrowing, the governments receiving the loans are forced into strict austerity programs, resulting in drastic cuts to education, infrastructure, pensions, and other social services (Aguirre & Reese, 2004). As social inequality increases, so does migration (Bacon, 2008).

Like the IMF and World Bank, corporations and private investors seeking to expand markets across international borders have led to economic devastation in many developing countries. The ability and tendency of corporations to pull economic resources from an area when profits wane and set up shop in another region creates obvious problems for a population which has grown dependent on these companies for its livelihood. With this flight of capital, workers lose the ability to support themselves and

their families in their home countries, and head to the U.S. in search of work (Aguirre & Reese, 2004).

In addition to the whims of fickle corporations, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has also played a large role in creating economic crises in Mexico and the resulting diaspora—the largest diaspora in the world (Wise, 2006). Although proponents of free trade claim that trade across open borders will help stabilize developing countries, such policies have failed to do so. For example, after the passage of NAFTA, Mexican yellow corn farmers could no longer compete with U.S. produced yellow corn—corn subsidized by the U.S. farm bill (Bacon, 2008). The flood of cheap U.S. corn put many Mexican corn farmers out of business. In the 1990s, Mexican coffee producers faced similar problems when the world market was flooded with cheap coffee (Bacon, 2008). Other crops have followed this same pattern (Bacon, 2008). As a direct result of free trade, many of these out-of-work Mexican farmers have migrated to the U.S. to look for work.

Because the day labor market is an informal market, its exact size is very difficult to determine. However, Valenzuela et al. (2006) estimate that “On any given day, approximately 117,600 workers are either looking for day-labor jobs or working as day laborers” in the United States (p. i). Gonzalez (2007) calculated the number of day laborers to be around 40,000 in California, which comprises approximately three percent of employed undocumented immigrants in California or 0.2% of California’s total employed labor force.

Although statistics on day laborers vary according to region, certain broad generalizations hold true: the typical *jornalero* or *esquinero*, labels derived from Spanish

words for “workday” (jornado) and “street corner” (esquina), is a young to middle-aged Spanish speaking male. About half of day laborers are single men, and the other half are married with families to support (Jensen, 2002). Valenzuela (2000), based on surveying 481 day laborers, provides demographic data about the day labor community in his 1999 study: 30% had been in the United States less than a year, and two-thirds were less than 30 years of age. More than half of day laborers had six years or less of formal education; five percent had none at all (Valenzuela, 2000). High school graduation rates for male Hispanics in the U.S. (approximately 53%) rank last for all major American ethnic groups, and day laborers’ rates are even lower (Valenzuela, 2000). Such low levels of education might help explain why day laborers resort to low-paying, often dangerous work. However, despite their low education rates, more than a third of day laborers have gone to high school and beyond (Valenzuela, 2000). In fact, the education level for all Mexican immigrants has been steadily increasing. In 2000, a little under 28% of the Mexican-born population had gone to high school or beyond; by 2003, this number had increased to almost 35% (Wise, 2006).

Nearly 60% of those surveyed looked for work four or more days per week. Their mean estimated yearly earnings from day labor work were approximately \$8,500. Because of the nature of their work, day laborers face a unique set of circumstances making their plight a particularly dangerous one. Valenzuela et al. (2006) states that half of all day laborers have reported at least one instance of wage theft.

Additionally, day laborers often experience prolonged periods of time without seeing their families. Unlike many immigrants, day laborers often come here without any intent to relocate. Many plan to work temporarily in the United States and provide for

their families by sending home remittances. This type of “temporary” work status can lead to more than a decade before a day laborer is reunited with his family once again. This profound difference distinguishes many day laborers from other immigrants who come to this country and eventually make the United States their home country. However, although migrant day laborers may plan to stay temporarily, a large number remain here for years, saving little, and finding themselves trapped without the means to return home. Valenzuela (2006) found that 40% of day laborers have been in the U.S. for more than six years. Leading totally separate lives away from their spouses and children not only puts immense stress on the family, but also puts day laborers at a higher risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, as their number of sexual partners increases during these prolonged separations (Organista & Kubo, 2005). Many other migrant workers do live with their families in the U.S. Almost half of the day laborers in Valenzuela’s (2006) study were married or living with a partner, and close to two-thirds had children, many of whom were born in the U.S. Regardless of their living arrangements, day laborers, either living without or with their families, must deal with the unreliability of labor while trying to support a household.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Forced to migrate north for economic reasons, with the aim of supporting their families back home, many Latino immigrant men come to the U.S. in search of work and, lacking skills and English language proficiency, find themselves working as day laborers. Once in the States, they face a myriad of problems.

Day laborers have often been the target of anti-immigrant sentiment and even violence. In Freehold, New Jersey, for example, a group of white residents formed the

group Pressing Our Elected Officials to Protect Our Living Environment (P.E.O.P.L.E.) in response to the perceived threat of Mexican day laborers congregating on their streets to solicit work (Cleaveland & Kelly, 2008). While in Mexico, gathering on the street for work is common, in Freehold, residents felt threatened (Cleaveland & Kelly, 2008). This animosity towards day laborers has led to many incidents of violence. In May 2007 in Los Angeles, a day laborer was killed on a street corner that had been the scene of anti-immigrant protests, one of which included a visit from the Ku Klux Klan (Smith, 2008). Days after this murder, six day laborers were kidnapped, tied up, and driven across the border to Mexico, where they were dumped off (Smith, 2008). In September 2007, another day laborer in Woodbridge, Virginia, was shot and killed after walking home after a day's work (Vargas, 2006).

Day laborers face harassment not only from residents but from merchants, security guards, and the police. Valenzuela (2006) found that in a two-month period, in regards to police abuse, 15% of day laborers had undergone an immigration status check, 16% had been insulted, and 37% had been forced to leave the hiring site. In a more specific example, at a hiring site in New Jersey, two police officers forced day laborers out of the shade of trees and into the 100-degree heat of an August day (Cleaveland & Kelly, 2008).

Stress also comes from a source beyond hostile Americans. Day laborers separated from their families face additional problems. Prolonged separations result in an increased number of sexual partners and thus a higher incidence of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (Organista & Kubo, 2005). Faithful husbands also often fall under suspicion from their wives back home, straining relationships (Walter et al.,

2002). And if injured, many day laborers are reluctant to tell their families back home; remittances shrink or cease altogether and the family suspects alcohol abuse or other irresponsible behavior (Walter, Bourgois, Loinaz, & Schillinger, 2002). For the day laborer himself, for whom the concept of the provider is central to his identity as a Latino male, the inability to live up to that role adds another layer of stress (Walter et al., 2002).

The nature of day labor work presents inherent problems including unpredictability. Day laborers are contingent workers without steady work, subsisting from job to job and day to day. Because the most common jobs for day laborers are in construction, their work is dependent on the weather. When it rains, the work ceases and wages are lost (Walter et al., 2002). When the weather does cooperate, the sheer number of day laborers vying for the small number of jobs available adds to their uncertainty. When a potential employer pulls up to an informal hiring site, day laborers often swarm the vehicle. The youngest and the strongest are chosen first and the majority is left behind waiting; many go home empty handed. This unpredictability leads to decreased wages, poverty, and even homelessness. Walter et al. (2002) found that most day laborers living in San Francisco were homeless. The ones who did have roofs over their heads lived either in shared rooms with four to six other men, all of whom slept in shifts, or stayed in homeless shelters (Walter et al., 2002). Although day labor is very dirty work, the men working in San Francisco usually had nowhere to clean up.

When day laborers do find work, it is frequently for abusive employers. Valenzuela et al. (2006) found that in a two-month period, 49% of day laborers in his study had experienced wage theft; 44% had been denied food and water breaks; 27% had



been abandoned at the worksite; 20% had suffered injuries on the job; and when injured, day laborers lost wages and more than 50% received no medical care.

Lack of workplace safety is another huge problem for day laborers. They often work with substandard equipment or lack basic safety protections such as gloves and masks (Walter et al., 2002). Many lack experience with the dangerous work they undertake and employers often fail to train them properly (Walter et al., 2002). When they are injured, they often do not seek medical attention. They do not want to miss work for a doctor visit or to stop work while their injuries heal. The language barrier can also prevent them from visiting a clinic. Additionally, as Walter et al. (2002) found, the majority of them do not realize that there are free clinics available to them.

Day laborer injuries can be very serious. One day laborer in San Francisco was injured while roofing, a dangerous job with a death rate six times higher than that of the average job (Walter et al., 2002). After 550-degree tar spilled over his face, torso, and legs, he recovered in a homeless shelter for three weeks and was left permanently disfigured. When he demanded compensation from his employer, his employer refused, stating that he knew the man was an illegal immigrant. After the injured day laborer looked for work elsewhere and couldn't find any that paid as well, he returned to his former employer, apologized, and resumed the dangerous roofing work (Walter et al., 2002).

Valenzuela et al. (2006) concluded that day laborers are “hired to undertake some of the most dangerous jobs at a worksite and there is little, if any, meaningful enforcement of health and safety laws” (p. 12). Although day laborers are covered under both health and safety laws and wage laws, much of this coverage is theoretical rather

than practical (Smith, 2008) and day laborers' illegal status and fear of retaliation from their employers makes them reluctant to report safety violations and other employer abuses. These fears, coupled with desperation for work, put day laborers at a huge disadvantage, a disadvantage of which employers are fully aware. Smith (2008) pointed out that although the popularity of contingent workers in the labor force has increased dramatically, laws in the U.S. have not been updated to reflect these changes. Acts such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) apply to companies of a minimum size and most day laborers work at small worksites (Walter et al., 2002). A lack of funding of OSHA also prevents the agency from monitoring smaller sites (Smith, 2008). Because employees themselves report wage infractions and day laborers are paid in cash, day laborers feel reluctant to report abuses such as wage theft (Smith, 2008). The short duration of day laborers' jobs also deters them from reporting workplace abuse. If they are abused, they will soon move on (Smith, 2008).

When day laborers arrive in the United States, they face a myriad of difficult and challenging situations such as anti-immigrant sentiment, harassment from police and residents, suspicious families back home, and adverse working conditions. All of these situations require the development of coping strategies.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the coping strategies of day laborers. As stated earlier, day laborers suffer high rates of job uncertainty, theft, and even murder simply to exist in this country. Though there is research on day-labor markets (Valenzuela, 2000), most of the studies that focus on the mental health of Latinos focus

on the general population and not on day laborers (Gamst, Der-Karabetin, Aragón, Arellano, & Kramer, 2002; Vega et al., 1998; Alegría et al., 2007). Therefore, more research is needed to better understand day laborers and the stressors they encounter in their day-to-day lives. To address this lack of research, this study explored the coping strategies of day laborers in San Mateo, California.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this research was to study the coping strategies of a group that would otherwise not have an opportunity to share their experiences. Day laborers live a secluded life even by the standard of most immigrants who integrate into a highly complex social context replete with members of their own culture and language. As a result, the following questions were designed to discover and elucidate their coping strategies:

1. What specific strategies do day laborers use to cope with the daily challenges and stressors in their lives?
2. In what ways does working as a day laborer affect sense of self, physical/emotional health, and family relationships?
3. What social networks and community/family resources are available to day laborers to support their needs?

### **Theoretical Rationale**

Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) was the theoretical rationale for this study. This theory was developed by scholars in order to address the issues of social justice and racial oppression in society (Delgado, 2003b; Stefancic, 1998; Yosso, 2006). The need to

construct a theory specifically around Latino issues led to the development of LatCrit out of Critical Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Bernal, 2002; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). Initially, these frameworks addressed “race-neutral” laws in relation to racial/ethnic subordination, but, now, they are increasingly used to apply race-oriented epistemologies to research. These interpretive frameworks allow for a broader, deeper analysis of societal and racial constraints for people of color. Moreover, emphasis is placed on viewing data through an interpretive lens within a proper historical and cultural context. LatCrit recognizes experiential knowledge and personal narrative as valid and critical to understanding racial subordination and real life problems. LatCrit helps to address issues, specifically language, immigration, migration, human rights, gender, class, ethnicity, and culture, thereby, enabling the analysis of the multidimensional complexities of Latino identity.

The day laborer, as an oppressed and disenfranchised member of society, faces innumerable challenges every day. The use of LatCrit as the theoretical framework for this research provided a powerful tool, to examine and analyze the overwhelmingly complex scope of challenges facing day laborers and the coping strategies they employ. LatCrit accomplished this by getting to the source of the lived experiences of the day laborers in my study. It was those lived experiences that illuminated and created a sense of understanding about the issues most important to my participants. In addition, LatCrit was an empowering lens by which to conduct this research as it strictly dealt with populations, such as day laborers, who are oppressed and disenfranchised.

Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), acted as the analytical lens through which the findings of this research study are discussed.

The key tenet of LatCrit, that applies to this research study, is that of a class system in which white Americans are perceived as superior, privileged and more powerful than people of color. This power and privilege perpetuates over time and also often through law, which tends to favor white Americans unfairly. Power over people of color can come in the form of financial, political, and educational power, but ultimately culminates in a societal position in which people of color are at a deficit.

In a more detailed manner, the key principles of LatCrit are the following:

1. Racism exists and is entwined within the society in which we live. LatCrit scholars assert that racism, sexism, and classism are experienced amidst other layers of subordination based on immigration status, sexuality, culture, phenotype, accent, and surname (Montoya, 2000).
2. There is a dominant white culture and it fails to validate people of color and their social successes and contributions. Yosso (2006) explains that communities of color are perceived from a deficit viewpoint as places of cultural poverty or disadvantage.
3. Social justice is the driving force and seeks to give voice and empowerment to people of color. (Lomas, 2003) maintains that by telling their stories, not only are the storytellers transformed, but the audience is transformed as well. In order to comprehend the story, the audience must understand the greater social context in relation to the text that they are assimilating.
4. Personal experiences and stories are appropriate and valid in understanding people of color. Yosso (2006) asserts that the targets of racism become empowered by hearing the stories of others in similar situations. They feel

solidarity with those in similar situations and also learn why they are targeted.

This helps them prepare a proactive defense against racist arguments.

5. LatCrit is a non-traditional, multi-faceted approach in understanding racism, both historically and contextually (Yosso, 2006).

### **Delimitations of the Study**

This research was designed to take an in-depth look at the lives of a very specific population of immigrants in order to analyze their ability to cope with their lived experiences. This study was limited to Latino day laborers working in San Mateo, California. Therefore, their stories may not be indicative of those from other backgrounds and different geographical areas. In addition to geographical limitations, the fact that twelve participants were used for this study, as well as the short duration of one month in completing the study itself affect the generalizability of results and conclusions.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study provided insight into the coping strategies of day laborers. There was very little research that delved into the lives of this population and their struggles and ways of coping. As a result, issues of exploitation and abuse have gone unrecognized and unresolved. This investigation was significant in that it gave a voice to those who would otherwise be silent and go unnoticed, and in so doing, learned how day laborers coped with the problems of daily existence. In addition, data and findings have the potential of providing much needed guidance for policy makers, city planners, and social

service agencies. Ultimately, studies of this kind expand the research base itself and encourage further research in this area.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

The literature review is organized into three categories: Globalization, Day Labor, and Coping Strategies. The first section Globalization, provides a definition, discussion, and background of globalization and its role in creating the current conditions in which large numbers of immigrants come to the United States in search of work. Also, a description is given of the different components of globalization and how they interact to create the current conditions under which laborers, including day laborers, have had to create new and novel ways to survive in the postindustrial economy.

The second section Day Labor, contains those studies that examine the phenomenon of day labor as a distinct contemporary employment practice. These studies paint a portrait of what day labor communities look like, who day laborers are, and where they are centered.

Finally, the third section, Coping Strategies contains those studies that discuss the differing coping strategies that day laborers have developed in response to their working environment. This section examines the positive and negative strategies as well as legal, social, and individual coping strategies that have emerged as day laborers cope with the challenges of their environment.

#### **Globalization**

In this section, globalization and its relationship to migration are discussed. While some hail globalization as the cure for all social and economic ills, others complain that it creates serious problems. “Push-pull” factors are central to the dynamic



of globalization. Push factors are negative circumstances in the home country such as a worker's inability to sustain himself and his family because of low or no employment. Push factors force citizens to leave their country. Pull factors, on the other hand, are positive factors in the new country such as abundant employment. Pull factors attract workers to the new country.

Suárez-Orozco (2005) believed that globalization is a complex process, and described globalization as a simultaneous economic and social process of change, combining three principal elements: the transfer of capital, technology, and the movement of people across international boundaries. These elements work together in a postindustrial process that brings about radical change in the postmodern world.

Aguirre and Reese (2004) discussed globalization this way:

With economic globalization, international labor migration is promoted to reduce labor costs, increasingly pervasive multinational corporations outsource manufacturing to low-cost enterprise zones, direct investment of foreign capital in underdeveloped and developing nations fosters economic dependency, cross-border production and marketing lessen the threat from labor unions, and international trade, coupled with international banks, hides the expansion of private and corporate capital. (Aguirre & Reese, 2004 , p. 1.)

The authors then described the effects of economic globalization. Private and corporate interests increase profits by paying laborers as little as possible as they work under poor conditions. This "race to the bottom" has led to increased economic inequality between rich nations in the North and poor nations in the South (Aguirre & Reese, 2004). In addition to earning lower wages, workers have no social safety net to fall back onto. Proponents of neoliberal economic policies argue that poor countries must cut social programs in order to compete in the global market. The IMF and World Bank have demanded poor countries in the South cut these programs and implement "structural

adjustment policies” in order to receive loans (Aguirre & Reese, 2004). These structural adjustment policies include “reductions in health, education, and welfare expenditures, the privatization of social services and public utilities, reductions in labor and environmental regulations, the removal of restrictions on trade and foreign investments, and the devaluation of their currencies” (Aguirre & Reese, p. 11). Such policies further exacerbate poverty rather than alleviate it.

Bacon (2008) also discussed these neoliberal policies, focusing on NAFTA, and related globalization to immigration and its ensuing increase. In his article “Displaced People: NAFTA’s Most Important Product,” Bacon outlined the negative effects of NAFTA on the Mexican economy and discussed the resulting increase in migration from Mexico to the United States. He stated that NAFTA put one and a half million Mexicans out of work between the years of 2000 and 2005 alone. During this same timeframe, the size of the Mexican-born population living in the U.S. grew from 10 million to nearly 12 million. Most of this population is undocumented (Bacon, 2008).

Although proponents of NAFTA predicted a reduction in immigration due to the large number of jobs the free-trade agreement would create in Mexico, NAFTA has had the opposite effect. For example, Mexican farmers growing yellow corn lost their livelihoods when they could no longer compete with cheap U.S. subsidized yellow corn that flooded the Mexican market after the passage of NAFTA (Bacon, 2008). Similar patterns occurred with other crops such as coffee and beans. When NAFTA eliminated custom barriers and price supports, more cheap American agricultural products flooded the Mexican market. As a direct result of NAFTA, “hundreds of thousands of small farmers found it impossible to sell corn or other farm products for what it cost to produce

them” (Bacon, 2008, p. 25). When farmers could no longer work their land, many of them headed north to look for work (Bacon, 2008).

The job losses were not limited to Mexican farmers. Before the implementation of NAFTA, a Mexican law required foreign auto companies operating in the country to buy some of their components from Mexican manufacturers. NAFTA prohibits such laws. After its passage, these car companies were free to use components from the cheapest sources and often chose their own subsidiaries located outside of Mexico. Mexican autoworkers joined the growing ranks of the jobless (Bacon, 2008). Bacon (2008) also claimed that NAFTA led to an increase in privatization in Mexico, a process that had already been well under way. This led to further job losses. When Mexico sold off its ports to foreign companies, for example, longshore wages fell and unemployment increased (Bacon, 2008).

When these workers leave Mexico, so too do a lot of social services. The services diminish or disappear because the tax base drops, therefore not enough money exists to pay for things such as schools and clinics. Although American companies benefit financially by hiring inexpensive contract labor, they do not pay for any of the needed social programs back in the Mexican communities these workers come from. And though workers do send remittances back to Mexico, they do not send enough to cover the costs of such social programs (Bacon, 2008). In addition, for the most part, these migrants spend their dollars in the U.S. As a result, communities in Mexico lack the funds for these programs and are forced to cut them. This in turn creates more migrants in search of a better life. Exacerbating the problem, money that could go toward social programs often goes toward paying off foreign debt. For example, in 1994, during the

Mexican peso crisis, the U.S. intervened, lending \$20 billion to Mexico. In exchange, Mexico pledged its oil revenue to pay off debt after revenue (Bacon, 2008). Money paid out to service the debt could no longer go towards serving the people of Mexico.

Like Bacon (2008), Wise (2006) discussed the direct relationship between neoliberal economic policies like NAFTA and Mexican immigration to the United States. On the surface, NAFTA seems to have spurred growth in the Mexican export sector. Mexico exports more goods than any other Latin American country and it ranks thirteenth in the world. However, the production of these goods is dependent on the cheap labor of Mexican workers. Ninety percent of Mexican exports are manufactured and more than half of those are produced in the maquiladoras, plants that receive materials for manufacturing from a foreign country, assemble the product, and then export that finished product to a foreign country. Wise (2006) outlined the conditions necessary for this export model and its resulting devastating effects on the Mexican economy:

The export thrust of the Mexican economy requires certain macro-economic conditions that are achieved through the constriction of internal accumulation, particularly the shrinking of public investment spending, the state's abandonment of strictly productive activities, the sale of public enterprises and control of the fiscal deficit, and attractive interest rates for foreign capital, which result in a reduction of the economy's domestic activity. Social inequality deepens, generating an ever-increasing mass of workers who have no place in the country's formal job market. This is why a third of Mexico's population belongs to the informal economy, which ultimately feeds the vigorous migratory process. (Wise, 2006, p. 39).

This export model presents other problems for the Mexican workers. Because exports are bound for the U.S. market, the export sector in Mexico feels the effects when the U.S. economy sours. Additionally, in recent years, the maquiladoras have faced competition from manufacturing plants in Central America and China, where wages are

even lower. When the Mexican plants shut down and relocate suddenly, thousands of workers who have grown dependent on the plants lose their jobs.

Wise (2006) questioned the supposed benefits of neoliberal policies like NAFTA on the Mexican people by pointing out that between 1970 and 2004, migration from Mexico skyrocketed. During this time frame, while neoliberal policies were implemented, the size of the Mexican born population in the U.S. grew by a factor of thirteen (Mexican National Population Council, CONAPO, as cited in Wise, 2006). In 2004, 10 million Mexican born immigrants were living in the U.S. In fact, the Mexican diaspora is the largest in the world. The remittances that these migrants send home are also the largest in the world. Where social services are lacking or non-existent, these remittances help fill a need. However, the \$13.4 billion dollars sent to Mexico in 2003 pales in comparison with the \$395 billion Mexican migrants living in the United States contributed to the American economy in that same year (CONAPO as cited in Wise, 2006). This transfer of wealth represents a huge loss of potential for the Mexican economy.

From these descriptions and definitions, it is apparent that globalization is related to a large number of negative elements of social and cultural phenomena. Globalization tends to exacerbate inequality, exploit child labor, and weaken the bargaining power of unions. How these elements interact allows researchers to attain a clearer understanding of globalization's influences on immigration and ultimately on day laborers and their coping strategies.

The impact of globalization on California is arguably as great as anywhere else. Before California's plunge into near bankruptcy this past decade, California was the sixth

largest economy in the world (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2004). Boasting two of some of the largest ports in the world (Los Angeles and Long Beach) and Silicon Valley, California's trade in goods and intellectual property corresponds to a tremendously high degree of globalization. California's economic globalization coupled with the wide stretch of the California-Mexican border has highlighted the contentious issue of migration between the United States and Mexico. The exponential growth of the information age of technology has pushed globalization to new levels. The impact of technological growth and migration in California are significant, which makes the state an ideal place to conduct this study of coping strategies of day laborers.

### **Day Labor**

Since it has been established that globalization spurs immigration, (Bacon, 2008; Wise, 2006) it is easy to see why California, a leader in globalization efforts, harbors a large population of immigrants. Immigration, therefore, is a primary source of supply of the day labor market (Valenzuela, 2006), which will now be discussed.

The idea of a day labor market conjures images of men assembled at a location such as a home improvement store, a U-Haul rental store, parking lots, and intersections. This is the hiring site. Employers drive up to the group to find workers suitable for the employer's requirements. The work is described and the wage for the job is agreed to, and the day laborers go to work for that employer for the duration of that specific job. This describes the basic process of day labor.

Certain characteristics distinguish day labor from the regular labor market. The day labor market is an informal market where contracts are not reduced to writing, and terms and working conditions are not specified. This results in the unenforceability of

such agreements. Another aspect of day labor is its short duration, (hence the term “day”) (Gonzalez, 2007). Although jobs can take longer than a day, the short duration of each job means that day laborers must constantly seek out new work. They wait at the same hiring sites almost on a daily basis.

The existing literature on day laborers focuses mainly on the number, distribution, and demographic measures of the typical day laborer and reveals how the statistics that describe day laborers contrast to the prevailing media portrayal (Valenzuela, 2000, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007). However, the studies on day laborers do not inquire into the mental health of this population. A handful of studies do focus on the mental health and coping strategies of immigrants, but these studies do not use day laborers as their sample set. For example, Dunn and O’Brien (2009) surveyed immigrants from Central America who attended English as a Second Language night courses at a local college in the D.C. area in order to study how Hispanic immigrants’ psychological health was affected by various coping strategies.

To dispel negative ideas about day laborers, Valenzuela (2000) presented his findings from the Day Labor Survey in support of his thesis that day laborers are not the “desperate, bottom of the barrel, recently arrived job seekers” described in the media (p. 1). Using quantitative methods, Valenzuela collected primary data and compiled it into the Day Labor Study (DLS). The DLS was comprised of four parts. The first part included a 200-question survey of day laborers. The second part included 45 in-depth interviews of day laborers that captured additional information on day laborers. The third section of the comprehensive study focused on 25 in-depth interviews with employers of

day laborers, that is, the demand for labor in the labor market. The fourth part offered 10 case studies of different hiring sites.

The survey included 481 randomly selected immigrant day workers from 87 hiring sites in Southern California and was the first survey of day laborers in the U.S. ever undertaken.

After defining the sample population, Valenzuela (2000) introduced a model of the day labor market that explains the origins and persistence of this informal market. This helps to establish the day labor market as a consequence of globalization and ensuing immigration, rather than a case of immigrants stealing jobs away from local citizens.

Once Valenzuela defined the day labor market, he analyzed basic demographic, social, and labor market characteristics. He found that laborers differ widely in their date of arrival to the U.S., length of participation in the day labor market, income, level of human capital, working conditions, and experiences of abuse and discrimination from employers.

Valenzuela noted four methodological challenges of carrying out the survey. The first challenge resulted from the lack of a well-defined occupational category for day labor work: “Day labor does not exist in the Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC) or the Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) which is used by the US Bureau of the Census and Department of Labor” (Valenzuela, 2000, p. 2). The second obstacle that the methodology had to address was the constantly fluctuating status of a day laborer. Since jobs are of short duration and job search is frequent, the employment status of a day laborer rapidly changes from employed to unemployed. This means that the time of



day or season affects the number of day laborers. The mobility of hiring sites presented the third methodological issue. Hiring sites that appear and disappear, or are not as obvious as others, are not included in the number of hiring sites in Valenzuela's (2000) DLS. Thus, trying to calculate the day laborer population is difficult. Fourth, a day laborer may work full-time or may work part-time as a day laborer to supplement income from a job in the formal labor market. Therefore, an individual's employment status as a day laborer is fluid and changes over time.

From this survey, Valenzuela confirmed his hypothesis and concluded that day laborers do not fit the stereotype of desperate unemployed workers. Rather, he found diversity in the level of human capital, tenure in the day labor market, time of arrival in the United States, and family structure of day laborers. Although most day laborers have worked in the informal hiring market for less than a year, one fourth have worked in this market for over six years. However, the author found that the sample population was homogenous in nativity and legal status. Most came from Mexico and did not have legal documentation.

After analyzing the data, Valenzuela suggested reasons why the day labor market continues to thrive. The day labor market presents many attractive factors for immigrants. For example, a day laborer earns comparable income to minimum wage jobs in the formal market, after controlling for taxes. The flexibility and diversity of the jobs allows workers to learn many skills, such as roofing, landscaping, and painting which builds human capital for future jobs. Additionally, because day laborers work for employers for very short periods, they do not have to deal with difficult bosses for very long. This becomes more important for workers with limited English proficiency.

A strength of the Valenzuela (2000) study was its original compilation of day laborer data that heretofore did not exist. Being the only source of such information, it is the gold standard. However, Valenzuela (2000) himself admitted that his study is a first presentation of findings from his Day Labor Survey. He suggested that the data set can be used for more detailed analysis and stronger generalization in future studies to understand the significant yet unknown market of day laborers.

Gonzalez (2007) drew upon Valenzuela's (2000) empirical study in order to answer the question: How are local governments handling the presence of day labor markets in their communities? By answering this question, Gonzalez (2007) hoped to diffuse some of the tension between immigrants and native locals, and reduce or divert animosity targeted toward day laborers. By building upon Valenzuela's (2000) work, Gonzalez was able to suggest some policies regarding regulating the day labor market. Like Valenzuela, Gonzalez's study also examined the California day labor market.

Gonzalez (2007) employed a mixed methods approach in order to address the question of how local governments handle the presence of day labor through imposing local ordinances and establishing and funding worker centers. Local ordinances included limiting solicitation by workers, restricting, or even banning hiring sites. In the face of legal challenges, however, many of these types of ordinances have been struck down as discriminatory or unconstitutional. Gonzalez found that worker centers have problems as well. They attract fewer contractor employers, and thus workers who use the centers earn an even smaller income than they would looking for work at an informal site. However, Gonzalez found that worker centers are an effective way to provide day laborers with some formal protection from labor abuses and harassment from police.

Gonzalez concluded that a single policy in the form of ordinances or worker centers would not solve the friction between local communities and day labor markets. However, a combination of ordinances that would require both the establishment of worker centers and that employers use these centers would be on the right path. In addition, any ordinances imposed must be fair, just, and legal in accordance with constitutional rights.

A strength of Gonzalez's paper was that he recognized the disadvantages of worker centers over informal hiring sites. Encouraging day laborers to make use of worker centers correlated with lower incomes. Gonzalez suggested that, compared with informal hiring sites, either fewer employers use the worker centers, or more workers do, resulting in congestion and lower wages. Further study investigating the reasons why day laborers at worker centers earn less than their counterparts at informal hiring sites might explain other aspects of the little known day-labor market.

Like Gonzalez, Valenzuela expanded upon his Day Labor Survey of 2000 to include multiple states beyond California (Valenzuela et al., 2006). He and his colleagues were motivated in part by "inaccurate and unsubstantiated portrayals" of day laborers. In "On the Corner: Day Labor in the U.S.", Valenzuela et al. (2006) compiled the most comprehensive data collection on day laborers in the U.S.

Valenzuela et al. conducted a national survey that gathered information on 2,660 day laborers from 264 hiring sites in 139 municipalities located in 20 states, and Washington D.C. The researchers used this data to characterize important aspects of the day labor market. Their findings revealed that the day-labor market jeopardizes workers' rights. Day laborers work at hazardous job sites, are often not paid for their work, and

are subject to abuse from employers. Because the day labor market continues to grow, the authors stressed the need for governmental protection. They maintain that such abuse and illegal activity on the part of employers warrant attention and policy protection.

The survey was divided into four sections. The first section described the organization of the day-labor market based on the Valenzuela (2000) Day Labor Study (DLS). Descriptive statistics included the size of the day labor market in the nation, the geographic distribution and prevalence across the country, and the types of hiring sites. Hiring sites were labeled informal (street corners) or formal (worker centers). The second section focused on the type of jobs for which day laborers are hired, wages and income, and working conditions. The third section presented a demographic profile of day laborers. Country of origin, length of residency in the United States, family and household status, and educational attainment, were all reported to better explain day laborers' motivation for immigrating to the U.S. The fourth section addressed various approaches that might ensure greater worker protection, mitigating the tension between the local community and the day labor market in their respective areas.

The strength of this paper was that it was a national survey—the first of its kind. The NDLS was a comprehensive data compilation that includes basic data of the national day labor market, and thus, was a major contribution to this area of study. In addition, the comprehensive size of the study and the random sampling helped to ensure reliable, unbiased data. Another strength is the breadth of information gathered. The authors recorded macro data such as size and distribution of the day labor market, which gives a good picture of day labor work throughout the U.S. that can be compared and contrasted.

They also recorded micro data such as demographic variables, occupational information, and economic data to facilitate further studies into the life of a day laborer.

Valenzuela et al. (2006) further assembled data on the prevalence of day laborer injuries in order to compare that rate to the injury rate of workers doing the same job in the formal job market. However, a weakness of this study is that it did not inquire into how workers feel mentally about the stresses of working as a day laborer. The NDLS did report the average number of missed workdays from injury (33). Yet, it did not take the crucial step of identifying how these abuses and injuries affected the mental health of day laborers and how they coped with the constant abuse from employers or the frequent violation of their worker's rights.

While the NDLS reported on the prevalence of worker injury in the day labor market, Walter et al. (2002) examined the link between the risk of these work-related injuries and the social context of day laborers in the U.S. Latinos in the general population experience a 20% higher incidence of work-related deaths than whites or African-Americans. Because day laborers work in dangerous jobs such as construction, their death rate is even higher.

Walter et al. used qualitative, ethnographic methods. The study included 38 day laborers, 11 of whom had been injured on the job. Most of the participants had immigrated from Mexico and most of them were homeless. They searched for work in San Francisco's Latino Mission District on the street corners of Cesar Chavez Street. The principal investigator, a non-Latino Spanish speaker, observed the participants over a period of eight months. During this time, he developed relationships with the participants, accompanied them to the hiring site, and socialized with them in the

homeless shelter. He conducted extensive interviews with the 11 injured participants. These interviews were recorded and transcribed, translated to English and verified by the principal investigator and a third party. During these interviews which lasted between one and three hours, participants discussed their injuries, the effects of their injuries on their jobs, and their experiences with health care. Interviews took place in restaurants, in the homeless shelter, or outdoors.

The patterns that emerged from the study revealed the relationship between the social context of day laborers and work injury. The patterns were confirmed in a previous study in which the researcher examined day laborers searching for work at the same hiring site. A Latina physician who had worked for 13 years with undocumented workers in San Francisco also verified the results of the study.

Five factors emerged from the Walter et al. (2002) study which increase the risk of on-the-job injuries for day laborers: “(1) the border passage; (2) the local dynamics of life on the streets; (3) features of the workplace; (4) emotional stress and family dynamics; and (5) injuries and experiences with health services” (p. 223).

The ordeal of the border crossing makes it difficult for day workers to return to Mexico. In 1999, 369 Mexicans died attempting to cross. The immigrants who arrive safely cannot move back and forth between the two countries easily and therefore are hesitant to leave. More importantly, because they have to pay up to \$1400 to a “coyote” to guide them to a city in the United States, they arrive essentially indentured. The difficulty of the border passage and this debt keeps them here, economically disadvantaged and unable to turn down work, even hazardous work that often results in injury.

The day laborers Walter et al. (2002) included in the study were for the most part homeless. Life on the streets made recovery from injuries difficult and also threatened the health of day laborers. During the eight-month duration of the study, three of the participants had been robbed at knifepoint. Day laborers are easy targets for violence on the streets. The recently arrived lack street smarts and because of their undocumented status, many do not have a safe place to keep their savings, such as a bank, and must carry their money with them. In addition to the problems inherent to living on the streets, searching for work on the streets is extremely unpredictable. Competition is stiff, especially for the injured. There is a large number of workers looking for jobs and a small number of employers. These employers seek out the strongest and healthiest for the physically strenuous jobs they want to fill.

Many of these jobs are not only physically strenuous but as the statistics show, dangerous. Roofing and sheet metal work, for example, typical jobs day laborers undertake, poses a 20% chance of work-related injury or illness. For an undocumented day laborer in debt, trying to support a family in Mexico, turning down work, even hazardous work, often is not a viable option. Lack of, or substandard safety equipment, lack of training, and inexperience increase the risk of injury. One of the participants of the Walter et al. study, a piano teacher, worked 10-hour shifts operating a jackhammer when he first arrived in the U.S. He was obviously completely unqualified for such work.

In addition to the stressors of unpredictability and hazardous work sites, day laborers also experience stress from living apart from their families. Family dynamics become strained during long separations. Suspicions aroused in wives back home,

worried that their husbands are either having affairs or abusing alcohol, strain marriages. The perceived “failure” to fulfill the role of head of the household due to physical absence also increases the stress levels of day laborers. Many day laborers also feel inadequate as fathers and providers, especially when injured and unable to work.

When day laborers are injured, more than half do not seek out medical care (Valenzuela et al., 2006). Walter et al. found that the most common injuries included back injuries, injuries from falls, carpal tunnel syndrome, burns, lacerations, and allergic reactions resulting from unprotected exposure to construction materials such as cement. The study indicated that several factors prevent injured workers from seeking out health care for their injuries: fear of deportation, language barriers, lack of awareness of the free health care services available to the uninsured, and lack of awareness on the part of health care providers of the reality of life for day laborers. For example, day laborers cannot afford to take time off of work, and wound care is difficult on the street.

A strength of the Walter et al. (2002) study is the inclusion of stressors which day laborers experience as a result of their work and social status. These stressors are unique to this group of immigrants due to their social circumstances. This unique set of factors warrants further study into this marginalized population.

This marginalization of day laborers that relates to workplace injury also relates to rampant workplace rights violations. Smith (2008) focused her study on legal protections and advocacy for day laborers. Smith stated that although the use of casual workers or contractors has infiltrated every industry in the U.S., laws that protect these workers’ rights have not kept pace with the rapid changes of this new employment dynamic.



Because day laborers are undocumented and often targets for anti-immigration sentiment and even violence, they are the most vulnerable of these contingent workers.

Smith first outlined the differences between workers categorized as employees and those categorized as casual workers or contractors. These differences explain the popularity of hiring contingent workers. When workers are categorized as employees, the employer must submit payroll taxes to the federal government. These taxes add up to approximately 7.5%. Contingent workers, or contractors, are regarded as running their own businesses. Employers are not required to pay payroll taxes for these workers. Similarly, although the Occupational Safety and Health Administration ensures that “every working man and woman in the Nation [has] safe and healthful working conditions” (OSH Act as cited in Smith, 2008, p. 205), OSHA standards apply to employers hiring employees. The main determinant of employee status versus contractor status is control of the worker. If the employer specifies where, when, and how the work is to be completed, the worker likely falls under the status of employee. Despite these stipulations, “rampant misclassification of workers as independent contractors is occurring” (Smith, 2008, p. 201).

Although the wage and labor laws and OSHA apply to all contingent workers, including day laborers, Smith stated that this protection is more theoretical than practical. Both laws rely on employees to report infractions. Because of their undocumented status and fear of retaliation from employers, day laborers are unlikely to file complaints. In addition, agencies that enforce these regulations do little to protect day laborers. Because the day labor market is a cash market, the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Wage and Hour Division lacks accurate data on the abuses that occur in this market. This makes

enforcing labor laws challenging. The DOL also “does not target the construction industry as a likely violator of wage-hour laws” (Government Accountability Office as cited in Smith, 2008). OSHA, like the DOL, does not target typical work sites where day laborers are employed. The short-term character of many of these sites makes health and safety inspections from OSHA impractical.

As a result of this lack of legal protection, day laborers are regularly taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers. Smith provided numerous examples of these abuses, especially from labor agencies. For example, in Baltimore, four temp agencies specialized in hiring homeless day laborers. Such a vulnerable group is easily exploited. Smith also found that many agencies and employers illegally deduct expenses from day laborers’ wages. These deductions included charges for check-cashing fees, transportation, meals, and even safety equipment.

Although Smith painted a grim picture of the abuses suffered by day laborers, she also showed how advocacy has improved conditions. She pointed to the growth in worker centers that communities and organizations have created as a response to the plight of day workers. These centers provide a safe place for day laborers to congregate and find work. At various community centers located throughout the state of Maryland, for example, workers are educated about their legal rights, trained for jobs, and taught English.

### **Coping Strategies**

The hostility that day laborers endure on each job has a significant effect on their morale. There can be detrimental effects to their mental and psychological health if something is not done to alleviate the constant stress. The statistics on working

conditions discussed in the previous section on day labor suggests that these workers suffer much abuse from their temporary employers. This runs from verbal abuse because many immigrants do not speak English to physical abuse in the form of hazardous worksites. Since these working conditions are sure to have a mental impact on stress levels, it is important to identify the coping strategies, and their effect on psychological health.

Dunn and O'Brien (2009) attempted to do just this in their study. They investigated the psychological health of Central American Latino immigrants and their coping strategies. Unlike the studies in the previous section, their sample was not targeted at day laborers. Specifically, the purpose of their study was to delve into the relationships among stress, social support, religious coping, and psychological functioning in a sample of Central American immigrants.

The researchers used quantitative methods and procedures. They surveyed English as a Second-Language (ESL) students in two courses in the D.C. area. The selection criteria for the sample was that participants were born in either El Salvador or Guatemala and now living in the U.S. for an indefinite amount of time. The study included 118 male and 61 female Spanish-speaking adults.

The authors investigated psychological health. The variables used to explain psychological health were perceived stress, perceived social support, and religious coping. Perceived stress was measured by the frequency with which the respondent experienced stress in the past month. The scale ranged from 0 (never) to 4 (very often). A sample question was: "How often have you felt that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?" Perceived social support was measured by administering the

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. Each participant was asked to rate from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) whether his or her “family is willing to help me make decisions” (p. 210). Religious coping was measured by using the RCOPE survey which helped to measure the religious coping methods of an individual.

It is important to note that some surveys had to be translated from Spanish to English. The teachers of the ESL classes helped in this translation, as they were familiar with the idiomatic differences between languages.

Using regression analysis, Dunn and O’Brien concluded that perceived stress was the most significant of these three factors, while perceived social support and religious coping did not appear to have a significant effect on an immigrant’s psychological health. The authors realized that this ran contrary to the role of perceived social support and religious coping in previous studies. Dunn and O’Brien suggested that the difference in outcomes might be due to the fact that all of the sample was in relatively good psychological health. Had they been in poor psychological health, religious coping might have played a more significant role.

One of the weaknesses of the Dunn and O’Brien study is that it samples from a population that is already seeking education. Many immigrants who come to the U.S. have low educational attainments (Kugler & Yuksel, 2008). By choosing a group of students, the researchers had a bias in that their sample was likely highly motivated compared to their peers. This may account for the lack of statistical significance of religious coping that the authors were trying to explain. More educated people tend to be healthier, physically and mentally, so that religious coping may not have been as

important for psychological health because participants were already in good mental health, which the researchers noted.

A strength of the Dunn and O'Brien study is the uniformity of their sample, which obviates the need for controlling for many factors. They all originated from the same native countries, had been confronted with urban life in a new country, and all understood the importance of education and increasing their human capital.

Given the limitations of their study, the authors stressed the need for more study on underrepresented groups in the field of psychology. Since Latin American immigrants make up a large proportion of the U.S. population, the authors feel that it is important to study their psychological health and factors influencing it.

Other studies more broad than Dunn and O'Brien have examined the mental health of the general Latino population. Gamst et al. (2002) studied the effects of Latino acculturation and ethnic identity on the mental health of Latino clients visiting the Tri-City Mental Health Center (TCMHC) located in Pomona, California, over a three-month period. The 204 participants of the study were clients of the clinic (52.8%) or adult caregivers of child clients of the clinic (47.2%). Half of the participants were first-generation immigrants and the majority was of Mexican origin with some participants of South and Central American or Cuban origin also. Participants were given a lengthy questionnaire to fill out, available in both English and Spanish. The questionnaire covered demographics and descriptive items, and included two scales. The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans (ARSMA-II) measured acculturation. Using this scale, the authors categorized clients as either more Anglo or more Mexican. The second scale, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), measured the participants' ethnic

identity. With this scale, the authors classified clients as having either low or high ethnic identity. Gamst et al. examined the effects of client-therapist match for ethnicity and gender and the variables of client age group, generational status, number of visitations and the resulting costs, and the Global Assessment of Function (GAF) of the clients. They also measured the effectiveness of treatment using the GAF-difference, with low indicating ineffective treatment, and high indicating effective treatment.

The results of the study showed that both Anglo-oriented and Mexican-oriented adult clients had a high incidence of more severe diagnoses, however, the Anglo-oriented clients' incidence of severe diagnoses (90%) did exceed that of the Mexican-oriented clients (75%). The clients with the least favorable outcomes were Anglo-oriented clients with a low ethnic identity score. These clients had the worst evaluations from their therapists. This outcome "challenges long-standing notions regarding the positive psychological effects of acculturation" (p. 499).

Other studies on Latino mental health reinforce the notion that first-generation Latino immigrants with low acculturation benefit from an 'immunity' that withers with each subsequent generation born in the U.S. Vega et al. (1998) studied the prevalence of psychiatric disorders among urban and rural Mexican Americans living in Fresno County, California. The study included both immigrants and Mexican Americans born in the United States. The researchers compared their results to the results of similar surveys on the prevalence of psychiatric disorders conducted in Mexico.

The researchers used mixed methods. They surveyed 3012 subjects living in Fresno County's Central Valley. All subjects were of Mexican origin. They had either immigrated to the U.S., or were second or third generation Mexican Americans born in

the States. Subjects were between the ages of 18 and 59. Of the 2012 participants, 1608 were men; 1604 were women. A thousand of the participants lived in rural areas, 1006 lived in a town, and 1006 lived in urban areas.

The study examined the prevalence of 14 different Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-III-R) psychiatric disorders that fall into the following categories: mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, nonaffective psychosis, somatization, and antisocial personality disorder. Diagnoses were based on face-to-face interviews conducted by trained administrators. The interviews were conducted in both Spanish and English, depending on the subject's language proficiency. The researchers used logistic regression analysis to examine the effects that sociodemographic variables had on the rates of 1) any affective disorder, 2) any anxiety disorder, 3) alcohol abuse and/or dependence, and 4) drug abuse and/or dependence. These sociodemographic variables were sex, age, education, income, employment status, marital status, language of interview, birthplace, place of residence, and length of residence in the U.S. for first generation immigrants.

The researchers concluded that the rate of any disorder for the immigrant population (24.9%) was almost half of that of the U.S. born population of Mexican descent (48.1%). English-language proficiency actually increased the rates of disorders as did residency in an urban area. Low incomes, however, did not translate into higher rates of psychological disorders. The researchers found that the rates of psychological disorders of Mexican immigrants are similar to rates of the general population in Mexico, which are lower than the rates of mental disorders in the general U.S. population.

However, over time, longer residencies in the U.S. erode this immunity, especially for substance abusers.

One drawback of the study is that although it did focus solely on subjects of Mexican origin, it included second and third generation Mexican Americans who had acclimated to American society. The majority of day laborers are Mexican immigrants and only seven percent of day laborers of all nationalities were born here (Valenzuela et al., 2006). Because of their undocumented status for the most part, stressful and often dangerous jobs, almost non-existent job security, and tendency to live on the fringes of not only mainstream society but immigrant society, day laborers must cope with many stressors that the general immigrant population does not face (Vega et al., 1998).

A major strength of the study is that it was conducted in both English and Spanish. Thus, the sample population was comprehensive, resulting in more accurate data.

Alegría et al. (2007) conducted a similar, more recent study to that of Vega et al. (1998) and made similar conclusions. Like Vega et al., Alegría et al. examined the prevalence of psychiatric disorders among Latinos living in the United States. They examined the data from the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS) (2003), a study that included detailed data on “psychiatric conditions and information on demographic, immigration, contextual, and sociostructural characteristics of Latino populations from different countries” (Alegría et al., 2007, p. 68).

The survey Alegría et al. used, the NLAAS (2003), was conducted between 2002 and 2003, and surveyed 2554 subjects living in the U.S. Of these subjects, 868 were of Mexican origin, 475 of Puerto Rican origin, 577 of Cuban origin, and 614 were classified



under the Latino subgroup “other.” Subjects were 18 years of age and older. The NLAAS studied disorders that fall into the following categories: depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, and “overall” psychiatric disorders (Alegría et al., 2007). The researchers used weighted logistic regression analysis to examine the effects sociodemographic variables had on the rates of these disorders. These variables included sex, age, education, Latino ethnicity, English language proficiency, generational status, and for first generation immigrants, age at time of migration and length of residence in the U.S. (Alegría et al., 2007).

The findings of Alegría et al. were very similar to those of Vega et al. (1998). Alegría et al. concluded that U.S. born Latinos experience psychological disorders at a higher rate than Latino immigrants do, although the disparity between rates is smaller than Vega et al. (1998) found. Alegría et al. also found that as immigrants live here longer, their rates of psychological disorders increase. Third generation Latinos had higher rates of disorders than first or second generation Latinos and English language proficiency increased the incidence of psychiatric disorders. Like the study discussed previously, this one also found that immigrants have lower rates of substance use disorders.

A weakness of the study is the inclusion of four Latino subgroups, especially the Puerto Rican subgroup. Because of their status as American citizens, Puerto Ricans can come and go from the mainland as they please without worrying about deportation. Higher expectations or greater feelings of entitlement than the other subgroup populations may explain the Puerto Rican subgroup’s greater incidence of psychiatric disorders. Also, among the other subgroups, only the strong tend to emigrate. As with

the Vega et al. (1998) study, the sample also included later generations of U.S. born Latinos. Day laborers differ from the sample in this study as most of them are immigrants, and the majority of them come from Mexico. This study also did not look into employment status or income level. Although Vega et al. (1998) found that a low income level did not have a detrimental effect on first generation immigrants, data on employment status may have told a different story. The tenuous employment status of day laborers can only add to their stress levels.

Like the Vega et al. (1998) study, a strength of this study is the inclusion of Spanish speaking subjects. In the case of Alegria et al., 50% of respondents were Spanish speaking. Another strength is that the study focused on the mental health of Latinos and addressed the need for mental health services for this population, especially its Spanish-speaking segment. Although the Latino population is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, few studies have been conducted into the mental health of this group.

Another study, this one by Magaña and Hovey (2003), examined the mental health of a more specific Latino group, Mexican migrant farm workers living and working in the Midwest. The purpose of the study was to identify the stressors experienced by migrant farm workers and to determine which stressors had a greater association with symptoms of anxiety and depression. The study also identified the coping strategies employed by the migrant farm workers in order to alleviate these stressors.

The researchers used both qualitative and quantitative methods and procedures. They selected 38 female and 37 male migrant farm workers of Mexican origin living and

working in Ohio or Michigan during the 1998 summer harvest. Sixty percent of the participants were first-generation immigrants to the U.S. and almost half of the participants had lived in the U.S. for over 10 years.

Magaña and Hovey explored stressors and their effect on psychological health. Individual interviews were conducted in either Spanish or English, depending on the participant's preference. Participants were asked questions about demographic information such as age, ethnicity, generational status and place of birth, and work history. Participants were then asked to describe in their own words the stressful experiences they had undergone as migrant farm workers and what specific strategies they employed to cope with these stressful experiences. After the interview, participants were given questionnaires to fill out. The researchers used the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI) scale to assess the participants' anxiety levels. They used the Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression Scale (CES-D) to measure the participants' levels of depressive symptoms.

After analyzing the data, the authors identified 18 specific stressors and their associated coping strategies. Separation from friends and family was the top stressor, identified by more than 50% of men (women identified this stressor approximately half as much). In order to cope with being away from loved ones, participants tried to call or write but had difficulty doing so due to time and money constraints. Nearly 40% of participants identified rigid work demands such as long hours, a lack of time off of work, and working in inclement weather as another stressor. Acceptance of this difficult situation was the most common coping strategy for this stressor. Other stressors cited by similarly high percentages of participants included low income, substandard housing, and

language barriers. Near the bottom of the list of identified stressors was acculturating to a new environment. Only eight percent of respondents (2.6% of women and 13.5% of men) experienced this stressor. Magaña and Hovey found high levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms in the participants, with 31% of participants displaying symptoms of anxiety according to the anxiety scale, the PAI. Thirty-nine percent of participants showed symptoms of depression on the scale for depression, the CES-D. They concluded that the stressors of rigid work demands and poor housing conditions had the strongest association with symptoms of anxiety. Rigid work demands and low income had the strongest association with symptoms of depression.

Unlike the sample populations of the studies on psychological health previously discussed, in which the sample population was from the general Latino population, the sample population of the Magaña and Hovey study was more similar to the day laborer population. Like many day laborers, the farm workers in the study were migrants and the majority of them came from Mexico. They experienced similar stressors that day laborers experience such as working at difficult and dangerous jobs, living in poverty, struggling with language barriers, being away from their loved ones, and dealing with unpredictability on a regular basis.

A limitation of Magaña and Hovey (2003) is the fact that the sample population is in the Midwest where the Mexican population is quite low. Migrant workers of Mexican origin in California, for example, have a much larger population that may result in lower language barriers and greater social support. These factors might affect the psychological health of migrant workers more positively. The authors suggested that further research is necessary into other migrant streams going to different areas of the country such as

California. They also stressed the need for more research into the causes of anxiety and depression in this migrant population, given the high levels of symptoms in the participants.

Like Magaña and Hovey (2003), Diaz and Caleron (2003) also examined the mental health of immigrants, most of whom were Mexican. These subjects were specifically day laborers who frequented the Pomona Day Labor Center (PDLC) in Pomona, California. The majority of these day laborers were Mexican. Outlining the history of the center exposed some of the difficulties that these day laborers faced. A 1996 statute had made soliciting work on street corners of Pomona illegal but also required that a hiring center be established for these workers. However, the PDLC did not open until 1998, leaving the day laborers nowhere to solicit work but on the street illegally, which led to many arrests and difficulties for these day laborers in the interim. Through his observations at the PDLC, Diaz and Calderon found that alcohol abuse was not evident as a coping strategy for these workers. Although this study did not specifically focus on alcohol or substance abuse, it did give valuable insight into day laborers and their coping strategies.

Michel (2008) investigated the psychological health and coping strategies of Latino immigrants, and, like Diaz and Calderon (2003), also focused her research on day laborers. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to examine the stressors and coping strategies deployed to alleviate those stressors in a sample of Mexican immigrants working as day laborers.

Michel used qualitative methods and procedures in her study. She surveyed and conducted private interviews with ten participants, all Spanish-speaking males between

the ages of 23 and 45. All had arrived in the U.S. from Mexico within the past five years and had been working as day laborers for at least two years. Five of the participants were recruited from a formal yet unregulated hiring site. The remaining five were recruited from informal sites such as parking lots outside of Home Depot stores in San Carlos or Campbell.

The study investigated the leading stressors affecting day laborers, and coping styles, both emotion-focused and problem-focused. During the private, semi-structured interviews, all 10 participants chose to respond in Spanish. Michel followed a list of questions that started off by collecting basic demographic information such as socio-economic status, education, and marital status. She then asked participants about their immigration experiences. A sample question asked, “Some people experience difficulties during the immigration process. Did you experience any difficulties?” (p. 88). The next section on the questionnaire asked participants about their experiences working as day laborers, including what, if any, benefits day labor work provides, and questions regarding compensation and inherent risks associated with this type of work. Next, a brief questionnaire listed 10 various stressors day laborers face such as “lack of work,” “lack of money,” “lack of English abilities,” “inadequate housing,” and “dangerous job” (p. 97). Participants numbered the stressors from one to 10, one causing the least amount of stress and 10 causing the most. The final portion of the interview process discussed coping strategies.

To analyze the data, Michel began by coding responses in order to find themes within each interview and across them as a whole. She then proceeded to sort the responses. Although the participants’ answers varied regarding stressors, Michel (2008)

concluded that the greatest stressors day laborers face are “lack of work,” “lack of money,” and “fear of deportation” (p. 63). Eight participants coped with stressors using emotion-based coping mechanisms. Emotion-based coping mechanisms include spiritual practices, social activities, physical exercise, and substance abuse (five of the respondents responded that they used substances to cope). Two participants utilized problem-based coping strategies, such as making plans to call customers or budgeting money.

One of the weaknesses of the Michel study is that although it did address the need for mental health services for the day labor population, it did not examine the role that education can play in improving the lives of this population. Many day laborers have attained little education. Michel touched upon education lightly and found that only four of the ten participants had completed a secondary education which is equivalent to an American middle school education. She did discuss the benefits of educating this population regarding common psychological disorders and treatments. However, more academic programs to educate this population such as ESL classes could have a beneficial impact on their well-being, both physical and mental.

A strength of the study is its examination of stressors and coping mechanisms of day laborers, issues not previously addressed in the literature. The study looked at stressors beyond the more obvious ones of underemployment and financial hardship, such as the role traumatic immigration experiences and subsequent Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) played in the participants’ stress levels.

Michel ultimately recommended further examination of the day laborer population. Because day laborers are an invisible group that tends to withdraw from American society due to fears of deportation and the inability to speak English well,

further study of the stressors faced by this community and subsequent coping strategies may help develop better treatment methods and support systems to serve this population.

### **Summary**

Studies within the globalization section of the literature review revealed how institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, and neoliberal economic policies such as NAFTA have done great harm to the economic and social fabric of Latin American nations (Aguirre & Reese, 2004; Wise, 2006). This economic devastation has created a massive Mexican Diaspora, the largest diaspora in the world (Bacon, 2008). Furthermore, when immigrants come to the U.S. in search of a better life, they face very difficult conditions such as language barriers, oppression and poverty. Many of them also find themselves working undesirable jobs.

Studies within the day laborer section show that day laborers work at some of the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs. They endure a number of stressors inherent to their work and social positions. Some of these stressors are hazardous work that often results in injury, low wages, separation from family, poverty, rampant abuses from employers, inadequate housing, and harassment from police. My research investigated how day laborers cope with these stressors.

Studies within the coping strategies section discuss the stressors that day laborers encounter and how they translate to mental health issues. Although few studies have focused on the mental health of day laborers in particular, several in the literature review investigated the mental health of Latinos living in the U.S., the fastest growing segment of the population. These studies point to the fact that mental health issues exist within this group. Several studies showed that the rate of mental disorders of first generation



Latino immigrants is significantly lower than that of subsequent generations born in the U.S. (Gamst et al., 2002; Vega et al., 1998; Alegría et al., 2007). Furthermore, acculturation and English language proficiency do not improve mental health, but rather, are associated with an increase in the incidence of psychological disorders (Gamst et al., 2002; Vega et al., 1998; Alegría et al., 2007).

Of the 18 different stressors Magaña and Hovey (2003) found that affected migrant Mexican farmworkers, the most common stressor by far, experienced by more than 50% of men in the study, was separation from friends and family. The most common coping mechanism for these migrant farmworkers was passive acceptance of their difficult situations, indicating high levels of hopelessness which can in turn indicate depression.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

After a restatement of the problem and research questions, this chapter focuses on the methodology that was used in this study. It is divided into four main parts: 1) participants, 2) research setting, 3) research design and procedures, and 4) data analysis.

#### **Restatement of the Problem**

This qualitative study examined the coping strategies that day laborers utilized in order to deal with the challenges of their daily existence. As stated in the literature review, there was very little research into how undocumented day laborers coped with their environment in spite of the significant amount of research that existed on the adversity this population faces (Michel, 2008). Previous studies have focused on adverse stressors such as lack of money and living conditions (Michel, 2008), but further research is needed to understand what mechanisms this population utilizes in order to navigate the tremendous obstacles and struggles that they face on a daily basis.

Because this population is mostly undocumented (Valenzuela et al., 2006), day laborers often do not report or seek assistance in order to cope with their environment. As a result, not much is known about how they cope with their experiences. What is known is that there is a tremendous amount of worker abuse (Valenzuela et al., 2006) in the form of wage theft, violence, harassment, and even death (Vargas, 2006). Identifying what those coping strategies are is a crucial first step in understanding how this community of immigrants survives and acculturates into their new environment. Understanding coping strategies will also allow community members to better serve the needs of this elusive population.

## **Restatement of the Research Questions**

This study addressed the following questions:

1. What specific strategies did day laborers use to cope with the daily challenges and stressors in their lives?
2. In what ways has working as a day laborer affected their sense of self, physical/emotional health, and family relationships?
3. What social networks and community/family resources are available to day laborers to support their needs?

## **Participants**

In order to assess how well immigrants cope with the stresses of working in a new country, 12 Latino day laborers were interviewed and surveyed for this study.

Participants were from Mexico (2) and Guatemala (10). All participants lived in the Peninsula region of the San Francisco Bay Area and were between the ages of 25-45 years of age. All participants worked primarily as day laborers. In addition, all participants worked as day laborers for at least one year.

The researcher works in the San Mateo community as a social worker. As a result, he has access to the Latino community. Through these affiliations, the researcher had already established contacts within the day labor community. These contacts enabled the researcher to find the pool of participants he used for this study.

The researcher had regular contact with participants. Five of these twelve participants were chosen randomly through convenience sampling. The remaining seven participants were found through snowball sampling, the process by which current

participants recruit their acquaintances to take part in a study. Because of the researcher's proximity to San Mateo, he had continual access to additional participants.

During the course of this study, it was the researcher's intention to create a relationship that was open and honest. It was necessary to establish a rapport that allowed the participants to share personal information with the researcher. In order for that to occur, the researcher spoke with the participants in Spanish, his first language. During the initial meetings, the researcher had an opportunity to share his own personal experiences growing up as a migrant farm worker. These experiences acted as a vehicle to open the lines of communication between the participants and the researcher. Understanding that someone has had to face and endure common struggles helped to create a relationship that was more tangible and more importantly unifying. The researcher was able to, through his Latino heritage, history, personal struggles, and language, form a bond with the participants of this study.

In addition to this shared background, the researcher also capitalized on his previous experience as a school/community liaison. For four years he acted as a liaison for Hayward Unified School District. His specific school served families in the lower socio-economic sector with over 70% receiving free lunch (Hayward Unified School District, 2009) and approximately 57% being second language learners (School Wise Press, 2009). The school offered a Spanish Bilingual Program throughout the grades. In his position, the researcher worked closely with families and addressed their varying needs, including, but not limited to, educational services, counseling services, and social service support. During the course of his work he was able to foster a connection and a voice between the Spanish speaking community and the school, the district and the

community at large. Those communication lines allowed the “unheard voices” of the Latino community to grow into a viable force that proved to be beneficial for all. The researcher believes because of his personal background and proven successful ability to give voice to a segment of a school population that had been excluded from the mainstream English speaking district, that he could build trust and establish a relationship with the participants of this study, and together they could work to better understand the challenges and coping strategies of day laborers in San Mateo County.

### **Overview of Participants**

Here I profile the 12 day laborers that participated in my study. Although each had his own unique identity and cultural background, they all share similar experiences of what it means to be a day laborer.

Twelve participants were interviewed for this study. Initially, 15 participants were selected. However, three of the 15 participants decided to drop out of the study during the initial interview phase due to the fact that they were recently arrived in the U.S. and needed to find immediate employment. As a result, 12 participants went on to complete the study. Having 12 participants added to quality of this study in that the small number of participants involved were able to add more depth with stories and lived experiences as opposed to having a large number of participants and running the risk of not having been able to focus qualitatively on their individual contributions.

While in their country of origin, nine of the participants reported working primarily in agriculture, two worked in construction, and one worked as a security guard. None of the participants reported working in small businesses. The average length of time in the U.S. was six and a half years. While two participants reported having been

here only a year, one participant reported that he had been in the U.S. for 17 years. All of the participants reported being underemployed. Eleven of the participants in this study were married. All were in their first marriage and none had ever been divorced. Of the 11 participants who reported having children, 10 had more than one child. The number of children ranged from zero to seven. In addition, nine reported that their wives and children reside in their country of origin.

Finally, participants were given the opportunity to modify and make additions to and correct the initial data resulting from this study. During the group interview participants were given the opportunity to review data and give suggestions or comment on content and results of data for this study.

**Detailed Participant profiles.** This section gives a short biography of each of the participants. Each mini-portrait includes information about the participants such as age, native country, and marital status. Day laborers are often worried about revealing personal information and therefore, pseudonyms rather than their real names are used here in order to preserve anonymity. Furthermore, participants made it clear that they did not want to be contacted after completing the study.

**Carlos.** Carlos is a 37-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for nine years, is married, and has four children who live in Guatemala. Carlos lives with friends in San Mateo. A total of five people live in his current household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. Carlos had six years of schooling and finished sixth grade. He is fluent in Spanish and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, he worked as a security guard for various banks. In the U.S., he has worked in construction and landscaping. He currently cannot work due to a head injury he sustained while working

on a tree during a landscaping job. Carlos is very much the silent type but his influence within the group of day laborers was very substantial. The rest of the workers seemed to look to him for any decisions made within the group. He appeared to hold much clout among the entire group. During the interview and during the time spent with him, he was very optimistic and hopeful. He has dreams of going back to his native land and starting a business. He is very motivated and shared his story willingly and energetically.

**Dario.** Dario is a 52-year-old from Mexico. He has lived in the U.S. for 17 years, is married and has four children who live in Mexico. Dario lives with his extended family here in the U.S. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had six years of schooling in Mexico. He is fluent in Spanish and speaks beginning English. In Mexico, he worked in agriculture. In the U.S., he has worked in landscaping. Dario, along with Ascención, was one of the two oldest day laborers interviewed. He was very easy going and relaxed during the entire span of the research. He is very tall and slender. He and Carlos appeared to be good friends and worked well together. Dario did not appear fearful or skeptical like the other day laborers did at times. He was very candid about the issues facing the day labor community and readily shared his thoughts. His interests appeared to be in the circle of friends around him. He has a mild disposition and was also very easy to approach and talk to. He spoke often about his family back in Mexico and was eager to return to them after many years of being in the United States working as a day laborer.

**Ernesto.** Ernesto is a 38-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for 18 months, is married and has four children. He lives with his immediate family and there are five in the household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had six

years of schooling, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, Ernesto worked in construction. In the U.S., he works as a day laborer around private residences doing handy work. Ernesto enjoys watching soccer as a leisure activity. He also appeared to be in good shape physically. He stated that he enjoys going to the nearby soccer field on the weekend to play soccer. He also takes time to watch English and Spanish television in order to keep up with current events. He seemed timid at first but opened up communicatively after only a few minutes of speaking to him one on one. Once in the presence of the group, however, he became shy and withdrawn.

**Brandon.** Brandon is a 26-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for four years, is married, and has one child. He lives with his immediate family and a roommate, making a total of four in his household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had four years of schooling, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, Brandon worked in agriculture in the fields. In the U.S., he has worked as a gardener, has installed concrete floors, and has done wiring work. He is currently working full-time as a day laborer doing any job that comes available. Brandon was very shy during most of the research period. Both in groups and individually, he liked to keep to himself and did not reveal much. However, once in a while, something another day laborer said would resonate with him and he would immediately speak up and add to the conversation. Although Brandon has been in the United States for a few years already, he appeared to still be going through a pensive stage. He appeared guarded much of the time and did not say much.

**Felix.** Felix is a 34-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for one year, is married, and has two children. He lives with his immediate family and many



roommates, making a total of fifteen in his household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had no schooling, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, Felix worked as a laborer in the fields. In the U.S., he has worked in various jobs including construction, landscaping, residential moving, and demolition. Felix was also very reserved and did not say much. He was very observant and seemed skeptical prior to his interview and especially during the observation period. He was also quite communicative with his fellow day laborers and asked many questions many times. When asked to comment, however, he usually did not say much in response. Given his relatively short length of time in the United States, he was probably still becoming acquainted with the environment and was gaining information from the people he knew and trusted the most.

***Ascención.*** Ascención is a 52-year-old male from Mexico. He has lived in the U.S. on and off for 16 years, is married, and has five children who live in Mexico. He lives with friends and there are seven in his current household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had about six years of schooling, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Mexico, Ascención worked in agriculture. In the U.S., he has worked in various day labor jobs, including construction and landscaping. He was very comfortable and at ease during the entire research process and often would laugh to himself and with others within the group. As a result, he would often put the rest of the group at ease with his easy-going nature. His demeanor was also very soft and he carried himself with confidence and purpose.

***Armando.*** Armando is a 43-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for seven years, is married, and has four children who live in Guatemala. He lives

with friends and there are seven in his current household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had four years of schooling, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, Armando worked in agriculture. In the U.S., he has worked at various jobs including painting and gardening. Armando was very active during the research process. He was quite energetic and could often be seen talking and discussing with his fellow day laborers while being observed. His upbeat personality and positive attitude made him the center of attention. Armando's attitude probably made him able to learn and work a variety of jobs as a day laborer. He misses Guatemala very much and is eager to return to his family at the end of this year.

***Benicio.*** Benicio is a 48-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for eight years, is married, and has five children who live in Guatemala. He lives with a roommate and there are two in his current household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had two years of schooling at the elementary level, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, Benicio worked as a field worker. In the U.S., he has worked at various jobs including landscaping and gardening. Benicio had a very gentle nature and often referred to himself as ancient and uneducated. He was very humble but did participate actively during the research process. He was a bit unsure of himself and he had a difficult time arranging his thoughts, and communicating his responses. He appeared to try very hard at everything he was doing whether trying to find work or during an interview but would declare that he was just too old now. He appeared sad most of the time and was a little withdrawn as a result. When asked about going home, he said that he wanted to go home but could not because of his need to stay in the U.S. to earn money.

**Cesar.** Cesar is a 28-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for one year, is married, and has two children who live in Guatemala. He lives with friends and there are three in his current household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had three years of schooling, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, Cesar worked in agriculture. In the U.S., he has worked at various construction jobs including stucco work and installing floors, sinks and toilets. Cesar was the informal leader of the bunch. Through him, I was able to procure the majority of day laborers. He was also very well known on the street. At one point, a group of nearby day laborers came and consulted with him about a pending job that they needed advice on. Apparently, the prospective employer was a fraud and he warned them to stay away from him. Cesar was well acquainted with the day labor life and was very confident in this context.

**Dino.** Dino is a 45-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for one year, is married, and has seven children who live in Guatemala. He lives with an extended family and there are eight in his current household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had no schooling, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, Dino worked in construction. In the U.S., he has been employed as a mover and a housecleaner. Dino was very shy and timid at first, but opened up during the research after we became acquainted. He is also very curious and expressed his initial concern over who I was and asked specifics about the nature of my research. He was also very confident about himself and spoke clearly and with a sense of purpose and resolve.

**Eliberto.** Eliberto is a 22-year-old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for six years, is unmarried, and has no children. He lives in an extended family and

there are eight in his current household. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had six years of schooling, speaks Spanish and beginning English, and is learning English through the adult school in San Mateo. In Guatemala, Eliberto worked in the fields. In the U.S., he works in construction. Eliberto could easily be considered street smart. Although he was very young when he came to the United States, he felt very much at ease with the street life. While other day laborers huddled together, Eliberto could usually be found alone standing on the edge of a street as if trying to elicit business from those that were driving by. Occasionally, he would drift back to the group only to soon gravitate back to the vehicle traffic. He appeared much older than he was and dressed in a thick and heavy jacket with a ball cap pulled closely over his eyes.

*Francisco.* Francisco is 32-year old male from Guatemala. He has lived in the U.S. for six years, is married, and has three children who live in Guatemala. He lives with three roommates in an apartment in San Mateo. He is not a U.S. citizen or legal resident. He had six years of schooling, is fluent in Spanish, and speaks beginning English. In Guatemala, Francisco worked in the fields. In the U.S., he has worked at several jobs as a gardener, construction worker, and mover. Francisco has a gregarious personality and was often seen joking with the rest of the day laborers. He also has a mild disposition and got along well with the rest of the group.

### **Research Setting**

Participants were located and recruited from informal hiring sites in San Mateo, California. These sites were not fixed and were found throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Informal hiring sites were random sites typically located near or around major intersections or industrial areas, and home improvement stores and moving companies.

For example, day laborers commonly congregated outside of U-HAUL companies in order to offer their services because many people needed help moving heavy items. They often found that professional, licensed movers were no more careful than day laborers with moving these items, despite the higher cost of the professional services. Also, the flexibility of hiring someone on the spot appealed to many people who needed to move on short notice.

Third Avenue in San Mateo, a major thoroughfare with high visibility for potential employers, was one such hiring site. It was also close to residential areas, where gardening and painting crews were utilized, and has easy access to Interstate 101 for convenient travel to work sites. It was common to see many day laborers congregating near the U-HAUL business on this street.

Historically, such informal sites date back from the early to mid-1800's (Larowe, Licht, Martinez, & Wilentz, as cited in Gonzalez, 2007). In California, as populations shifted from rural to urban areas, and agricultural work became less accessible, skilled and unskilled urban workers became more common and informal hiring sites became more abundant (Camarillo, 1996). According to the National Day Labor Survey (Valenzuela et al., 2006), 68% of day laborers in California come from Mexico and 29% come from other Latin American countries.

The city of San Mateo, with a population of 92,256, is 20.5% Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Twelve thousand low-income residents live in San Mateo County and the March 2010 unemployment rate hovered around 10%. Day laborers utilize informal hiring sites in San Mateo regularly. Although these informal hiring sites created a controversy in San Mateo initially, they eventually gave way to the creation of a work

resource center that provides an alternative space for temporary day laborers and potential employers. This center was developed by a non-profit organization in conjunction with the city of San Mateo. Approximately 100 to 140 laborers register each day with a hire rate of approximately 21% (Samaritan House, 2004). Day laborers normally congregate at the informal hiring sites early in the morning, when there is a greater demand for various services. San Mateo is similar to other cities across the U.S. where day laborers congregate on the street corners and in open parking lots. Residents have mixed feelings about the presence of day laborers in their neighborhoods and city. Some are frustrated and intimidated by their presence, fearing an increase in crime (Gonzalez, 2007) and a decrease in property values.

### **Research Design and Procedures**

A qualitative approach was used in this study. Data was gathered through individual interviews, in-depth interviews, stressor questionnaires, follow up interviews to the stressor questionnaire, group interview, observations, and field notes. Themes and issues were then identified from the various instruments. For example, once the individual interviews were completed, certain themes arose that were then highlighted, coded, and recorded. The same process of identifying highlighting, and coding, and recording themes was utilized for group interviews, stressor questionnaire, observations, and field notes. A more detailed description of this process will be explicated in the sections to follow.

**Individual interviews.** Background interviews collected basic demographic information such as age, nationality, marital status, educational attainment, and employment history. Participants were individually asked a set of background questions

regarding demographic information in order to standardize the collected information across individuals. The same set of questions was asked of each person in Spanish. For each participant, at least 30 minutes was spent to conduct the background interview and administer the stressor questionnaire orally. The data resulting from this interview was then taken and analyzed by the researcher. For example, the age of each participant was recorded and reviewed by the researcher. Then, the researcher was able to come up with an average age for each participant. Similarly, the researcher recorded where each participant was from during the course of the individual interview. Then, once all of that data was recorded, the researcher was able to highlight country of origin collectively. It was through this process that the researcher was able to code and report where the majority of his participants were from.

The first part of the individual interviews covered basic demographic information, such as age, how long individuals have been living in the United States, legal status, ethnicity, and nationality. This followed the data collection in the NDLS (Valenzuela et al., 2006) and thus allowed comparisons between NDLS and this study.

**Education.** Level of schooling has been documented in Valenzuela et al. (2006) as relevant to analyzing the characteristics of the average day laborer. Valenzuela et al. (2006) collected data on educational attainment, which this study collected as well. In addition, the current investigation included information on participants' current schooling and intentions on future educational plans. It was from this information that the researcher was able to collect the entirety of the data on education. Like the individual interviews, data was collected and analyzed by reading responses carefully, highlighting emerging themes, and coding the themes in common. In the case of education, the theme

of primary educational attainment was established when all participants in this study had reported at least a primary level education. Participant educational level was established as the researcher analyzed each response in this area from each participants interview. Again, the researcher highlighted common responses, and the theme of a primary education was coded and recorded.

**Employment.** Data on employment was collected, since this was a direct reason why most immigrants come to the United States. Like the subjects in Valenzuela et al. (2006), participants in this study were asked their employment status, wage and income earnings, the number of hours worked, and type of occupation.

In addition to the employment data found in the NDLS, participants were asked the number of hours they worked relative to how much they wanted to work. This data was relevant because it gauged the amount of success immigrants have experienced (Dunn & O'Brien, 2009). For example, if immigrants came to the U.S. for a better job and did not easily find one, it was likely that their stress level would be higher, and that they would be more in need of coping strategies and social support. Information was collected regarding whether participants owned or shared a car, or rode public transportation in order to indicate their current level of economic success. For this study, the researcher was able to identify lack of employment as a theme as each participant responded that lack of employment created stress in their lives. This information was attained after the researcher analyzed the responses of each participant and highlighted each time a participant noted lack of employment. Collectively, the researcher identified lack of employment as a theme and the data was recorded as a major theme based on the fact that most participants indicated lack of employment as a cause of stress.



**Health.** Basic questions such as whether a person had a private doctor or had visited a dentist or eye doctor recently were indicative of mental well being and degree of assimilation. In addition, these were markers of economic success whereas visiting a county health clinic, receiving Medicaid suggested that immigrants could not pay for private healthcare. The frequency of physician, counselor, and emergency room visits in the past six months or year revealed levels of socioeconomic success, assimilation, and coping ability. The responses given by participants regarding health were then grouped together and analyzed. From this information, the researcher was able to identify and highlight responses that came up repeatedly. Those responses were then coded and a theme was established. For example, it was established that none of my participants had received mental health services after it was noted and recorded that none of the participants in this study answered in the affirmative when asked about having received mental health services at any time since their arrival in the U.S.

**In-depth interviews.** A research design using individual interviews as defined by Patton (2001), Bogdan and Biklen (2007), and Creswell (2005) was used to explore the research questions. During the face-to-face interviews, the researcher asked the participants prepared questions and also impromptu ones that arose from the discussion. The participants' answers were recorded during these sessions. The individual interviews delved into detail, with guiding questions on topics such as circumstances surrounding immigration, immigration experiences, and family relationships. Participants were given time to explain their thoughts, experiences, and histories during this more open-ended portion of the interview.

Individual interviews involved only the researcher and one participant. The advantage of this approach was that some issues were private, and some participants were less likely to reveal personal information to more than one person at a time. In addition, a one-on-one dialogue created a forum in which each participant talked in private without the formality of the group interview. An hour was spent on each in-depth interview, during which time each participant had at least 15 minutes to discuss personal history in depth. It was during this interview process that the researcher was able to record individual responses. Then, the researcher was able to analyze each interview after it was conducted. The researcher then highlighted given responses if they emerged repeatedly throughout the course of the interview. Furthermore, responses highlighted were compared to the rest of the interviews in an attempt to identify common themes.

**Stressor questionnaires.** The stressor questionnaire asked participants to rate a list of 14 stressors on a scale of 1 to 5. It was administered after the In-depth interview. Please refer to the appendix section for the stressor questionnaire. In order to validate the stressor questionnaire, a group of three experts, two from the field of education and one from social work, verified the instrument as to its ability to adequately measure stress factors. Please refer to the appendix section for more biographical information. The stressor questionnaire revealed individual stressors for each participant allowing the researcher to highlight stressors that rated either a 4 or a 5. Each time a response rated a 4 or a 5, the researcher highlighted that stressor and then collectively recorded and identified a given stressor as most stressful. The researcher was then able to identify the areas which were greatest source of stress.

**Follow-Up Questionnaire.** Participant interviews during the stressor questionnaire were examined to confirm consistency of answers. After each stressor questionnaire, additional questions emerged, which were then focused on during the follow-up interviews to the stressor questionnaire. Once this information was organized, tentative generalizations regarding common coping strategies were suggested regarding a typical day laborer's experience. For this study, the follow-up interview to the stressor questionnaire focused on how participants coped with the resulting stressors that were identified in the stressor questionnaire. If a participant identified employment as a key stressor in the stressor questionnaire, the follow-up interview focused on how that stressor was dealt with. The data emerging out of the follow-up stressor questionnaire allowed the researcher to identify themes that were relevant to the stressors experienced by the participants in this study. For example, if a trend of responses developed such as a reliance on friends, then the researcher highlighted those responses and added up the number of participants indicating a reliance on friends as a coping strategy for a given stressor. In this manner, the data was coded and ultimately reported in the findings.

**Group interview.** In addition to individual interviews, one group interview was also conducted. The group interview helped validate the data by increasing not only the amount of responses but the accuracy of those responses as well. For example, if one participant volunteered sensitive information, another participant who may otherwise have hesitated to divulge this same type of information felt motivated to do so, knowing he was not alone in his experience. Questions asked during the group interview session were more broad and generalized than individual interview questions, allowing the participants to focus on a wide variety of issues. The group interview was conducted

over the course of a two-hour period. As with previous instruments, the researcher analyzed the group interview for themes. Then, repeated issues that reappeared, were noted and color coded depending on the given theme. Finally, themes were identified and recorded for discussion in chapter four of this study.

**Observations/Field Notes.** The researcher conducted two observations at the hiring site, beginning early in the morning when the participants began arriving in search of work, and another after work hours. The researcher did not interfere with any day laborer's opportunity for work during the day. The researcher observed and made field notes regarding the setting details, the number of day laborers arriving at the site each day, the number of cars that stopped, the number of conversations participants had with potential employers who stopped, and the number of study participants that found work for the day. The researcher noted interactions that occurred between participants and employers, and participants and others such as passers-by on the street and in cars, police, merchants, and women. The researcher remained on the site until participants either left for their jobs or, if not hired, left for home for the day. The researcher neither interfered with the hiring process nor accompanied participants to the job site. The researcher also observed whether participants' behavior corresponded to their responses in the interviews. At the end of each session, notes were transferred to electronic form to ensure accuracy and guarantee the integrity of the data. All notes were used to compare responses of each participant in different fact-gathering sessions and modes. By using multiple data collection methods, objectivity increased and so did the likelihood that the data was reliable and valid.

**Confidentiality.** The researcher assured all participants of the confidentiality of their data. This was vital to maximizing the accuracy and response rates of the data collection. All participants were un-documented immigrants who would be reluctant to offer information that might result in legal troubles. To this end, names were not required. However, there was a space in the background interview to offer a telephone number, for any additional follow-up questions. But again, participants did not have to provide a phone number.

**Demographics.** The research sought to study 12 male day laborers between the ages of 25-45 years old because this was the most common age at which immigrants offer their services as day laborers. Older and younger males had less of a competitive advantage in offering their services for physical labor. This excluded females as well, which was another reason why they are not included in the sample. Potential employers invariably look for the most able-bodied men, and this comports with the study's participant age range of 25-45.

All 12 of the participants were recruited from an informal hiring site in San Mateo, California. Of the 12 participants, 10 identified as Guatemalan males and two as Mexican males. All 12 participants reported undocumented legal status. Age range of participants was from 26 to 52, with the average age 38. Participants worked an average of approximately 21 hours per week as day laborers with a low of zero hours to a high of 40 hours. All participants were from suburban areas outside of their respective capital cities. All participants spoke only Spanish, and no participant spoke an indigenous language from his home country. The participants in this study had a very basic level of schooling. None of the participants had an educational level above elementary school

and the amount of schooling ranged from zero to six years. All participants rated their English proficiency as poor and their ability to speak Spanish as good.

**Data Analysis.** Because this was a qualitative study, the researcher drew upon the research design and analysis principles of Creswell, (2003). After data was collected from individual interviews, stressor questionnaires, and observation notes, it was analyzed and coded or “chunked” into emerging themes. Emerging themes were color-coded. The unit of coding was a word or short phrase used by a participant that referenced a particular stressor or coping strategy.

An emerging theme (a significant stressor or coping strategy) was identified by the frequency of it being mentioned. For example, a number of participants made reference to the stressor of family separation, by referring to it in terms of “I miss them” (Eliberto), “Leaving your children really hurts” (Armando), “they [my family] are so far away” (Ascención), “It’s not the same as being with them at home” (Dino), and “I would like to bring my children to live here with me” (Carlos). Each of those chunks was counted as a single mention of the stressor of family separation. Any stressor or coping strategy mentioned by at least five participants was identified as a significant potential theme.

To verify emerging themes, the researcher went back through all the participant responses a second time, and looked for more evidence of that theme in the various instruments, again searching content for common or repetitive words and phrases associated with stressors and coping strategies. The researcher also double-checked with individual participants as well as with participants in the group interview to make sure that researcher analysis of comments/themes matched participants’ intended meanings.

This process allowed the researcher to code and confirm themes in an organized and consistent manner.

Finally, after identifying and confirming these themes, they were organized into categories, five stressors and five coping strategies, with each color-coded data “chunk” distributed to the appropriate category.

### **Qualifications of the Researcher**

Although I was born in San Francisco, California, my parents came to this country as migrant workers as well as day laborers. Growing up, I worked what is known as “the circuit” where workers travel from camp to camp looking for seasonal agricultural work throughout the Western part of the United States. Unable to cope with this way of life, my father became an alcoholic and our family disintegrated. Years later, I left the fields of California and subsequently became educated. My mother continues to work in the fields of California. Curious about how day laborers cope with environments of extreme adversity, I began my current research.

Having had the same general experience as the participants assisted me in garnering more insight and more accurate responses. It is reasonable to believe that my background helped me better understand and translate survey responses, especially from participants who felt more comfortable expressing themselves in Spanish. Given these factors, I felt that I was qualified to undertake this research.

## Chapter IV

### Findings

*Targets of racism become empowered by hearing the stories of others in similar situations. They feel solidarity with those in similar situations and also learn why they are targeted. (Yosso, 2006)*

The findings of this chapter are directly connected to the ability and willingness of my participants to share their stories and ultimately reflect on their situation in a way that allowed them to recognize and better understand their struggles. This chapter reveals important elements of their stories.

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one discusses the stressors that day laborers face on a regular basis. The stressor section lays the foundation for answering each of the research questions. Part two is organized around the three research questions. Like the stressors, the findings are organized into themes. The first question focuses on the theme of coping strategies related to the stressors. The second question focuses on the theme of effects of working as a day laborer. Lastly, the third question focuses on the theme of resources for supporting day laborers. Regarding the use of two languages in the text, all research with participants was conducted in Spanish. I am including the participants' words in Spanish in order to honor their authentic voices. To improve the flow of the text, however, for non-Spanish readers, the quotes will first appear in English followed directly by Spanish.



## Stressors

Day laborers living and working in the United States face many stressors in their day-to-day lives on a number of fronts. These stressors drove this study and were at the core of each research question examined in the next section.

The research for this study revealed five significant stressors: lack of English, lack of employment/low income, family separation, lack of medical care, and fear of deportation. Eleven of the 12 participants experienced four of these stressors to a significant degree; one experienced three of these stressors to a significant degree. Following the detailed discussion of the stressors, findings will be provided for each of the research questions.

**Lack of English.** Lack of English emerged as a stressor in the research. On the stressor questionnaire, 11 of the 12 participants rated their inability to speak English on a scale from one to five (with five causing the most stress) as a five. During the follow-up questionnaire, when asked how their inability to speak English made them feel, the participants' answers were similar. Benicio wanted "to know how to speak the language. It is difficult." [saber hablar el idioma. Es difícil.] Dario felt "depressed and with a lot of anxiety because I would like to know the language." [deprimido y con mucha ansiedad porque yo me gustaría saber el idioma.] Ernesto also reported feeling "depressed" [deprimido] and said he feels he lacks "freedom, not being able to express myself." [libertad, no poder expresarme.] When asked what specific things cause anxiety, Dario said, "The language [not speaking English]. On the one to five scale, I feel I'm a number five because I don't speak the language." [el idioma [no poder hablar inglés]. En una escala de cinco, yo siento que soy el número cinco porque yo no hablo el idioma.] Carlos

also supported this finding, saying, “I personally feel I am in a very low level because I do not speak the language.” [yo personalmente siento que estoy en un nivel muy bajo porque no hablo el idioma.] During the individual interview, Ernesto explained that his inability to speak English caused significant stress:

I feel that I am fulfilling my role but I also feel limited here because of not speaking the language. I do not know how to speak English and I'm not even able to go to school. I have been here a year. I just got here. Actually friends tell me that before there weren't any fees to go to school to learn English. Now they are charging 30 dollars. So, there's a conflict because if I don't have a job, I can't pay to go to school to learn English.

Yo siento que estoy logrando mi deber pero también me siento limitado por no poder hablar el idioma. Yo no sé hablar inglés y ni puedo ir a la escuela. Tengo un año aquí. Acabo de llegar. Actualmente mis amigos me dicen que antes no costaba para ir a la escuela para aprender inglés. Ahora cobran 30 dólares. Entonces hay conflicto porque si no tengo trabajo no puedo pagar para ir a la escuela para aprender inglés.

Low proficiency in English caused significant problems at work. Regarding speaking English at work, during the background interview Carlos said, “Yes, I need to speak it a lot.” [Sí, yo necesito hablarlo bastante.] Armando's comments during the individual interview further support this: “Well the first days here, yes, it is difficult. I was shy, my boss was Anglo, and I couldn't communicate with him.” [Bueno, los primeros días aquí, si, es muy difícil. Yo era penoso, mi jefe era Anglo, y yo no me podía comunicar con él.] During the individual interview, Benicio commented, “I encounter the challenge of not speaking English. Sometimes, the boss will ask me to go get a hammer and I will bring the broom.” [Yo me encontré con la dificultad de no hablar inglés. Algunas veces, mi jefe me preguntaba que le diera un martillo y yo le traía la escoba.] Ernesto echoed this: “It's difficult because I am not able to understand the

language to ask how to do the jobs.” [Es difícil porque yo no puedo entender el lenguaje para preguntar cómo hacer los trabajos.]

**Lack of employment/low income.** Lack of employment and accompanying low income also emerged as a stressor. On the stressor questionnaire, Ascención, Benicio, Brandon, Cesar, Carlos, Eliberto, Ernesto, and Francisco all indicated that lack of employment caused a great deal of tension. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Dario said, “From the one to five scale, I feel I’m in number five because of...lack of employment.” [En una escala de uno a cinco, yo me siento en el número cinco porque...la falta de empleo.] During the individual interview, Dario also indicated he is unable to support his family “right now because of the lack of employment. I am only making enough to pay the rent and buy food.” [Ahora por la falta de empleo. Solo gano lo suficiente para pagar renta y comprar comida.] During the group interview, Carlos shared, “Personally, it stresses me, the lack of employment.” [Personalmente, me estresa la falta de empleo.] During the follow-up to the stressor questionnaire, when asked how the stressor of not finding employment made the participants feel, similar responses emerged. Ascención said the lack of employment made him feel “Depressed. I get very depressed.” [Deprimido. Me pongo bien deprimido.] Carlos also felt “Depressed. I get very depressed because I have a lot of responsibilities.” [Deprimido. Yo me pongo bien deprimido porque tengo muchas responsabilidades.] Cesar worried about his family: “I start thinking how am I going to send money to my family. I get worried. I start thinking that I don’t have a job or money. It makes me feel worthless.” [Yo empiezo a pensar de cómo le voy a mandar a mi familia dinero. Me preocupo. Empiezo a pensar de que no

tengo trabajo ni dinero. Me hace sentir que no tengo valor.] Dario also said lack of employment made him feel “depressed” [deprimido] and “uncomfortable.” [incomodo.]

During the background interview, 10 of the 12 participants indicated that they wanted to work more hours, in order to reduce their level of anxiety associated with lack of employment. Ascención worked 20 hours per week but wanted to work 70. Armando said, “I work but not enough...I would like to work every single day, 12 hours per day.” [yo trabajo pero no lo suficiente...me gustaría trabajar todos los días, 12 horas al día.] Benicio indicated that, “There are weeks I don’t work at all. There are weeks I work around eight hours. It varies. Normally, I would like to work at least eight hours per day.” [Hay semanas que no trabajo para nada. Hay semanas que trabajo alrededor de ocho horas. Varía. Normalmente, me gustaría trabajar por lo menos ocho horas al día.] Carlos, unable to work due to a work-related disability, indicated that he wanted to work 40 hours per week. Cesar stated, “At the moment, there aren’t enough jobs. Sometimes I only work 12 hours. I would like to work eight hours a day.” [Por el momento, no hay muchos trabajos disponibles. A veces trabajo 12 horas. Me gustaría trabajar 8 horas por día.] Dario responded, “I’m not sure how many hours I’m working right now because there isn’t enough work.” [No estoy seguro cuantas horas estoy trabajando en estos momentos porque casi no hay trabajo] Dino said, “Sometimes I work 10 hours.” [A veces yo trabajo 10 horas.] Eliberto works 20 hours a week. He wanted to work “eight hours per day, forty hours a week.” [ocho horas por día, cuarenta horas por semana.] Francisco shared, “There are no set hours for a given week. Last week, 20 hours, that is all.” [No hay horas exactas por semana. La semana pasada, 20 horas, eso fue todo.]

Although Brandon did work 40 hours per week—more than anyone of the other participants—he also wanted to work more hours.

Lack of employment obviously leads to a low income. On the stressor questionnaire, Ascención, Brandon, Benicio, Cesar, and Francisco indicated that low income caused a great deal of worry. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Dario said, “A person comes to the United States to look for opportunities but one is mistaken by coming here. You can only make enough money to eat and sometimes you don’t even make enough to pay for rent.” [Una persona viene a los Estados Unidos en busca de oportunidades pero uno se equivoca en venir aquí. Uno solo gana lo suficiente para comer, a veces ni se gana lo suficiente para pagar la renta.] The lack of income made sending home remittances difficult, which caused tension. Several of the participants spoke of this stressor during the individual interviews. Carlos can no longer send home money: “I used to send money to support [my family], to pay for the schooling of my children but since the date of my accident until today I have not received any compensation, not even from my insurance.” [Yo antes mandaba dinero para apoyar a mi familia, para pagar la escuela de mis hijos pero desde la fecha de mi accidente hasta el día de hoy, yo no he recibido compensación, ni de mi aseguranza.] Ernesto sends only “around 10% because of my lack of employment.” [alrededor de 10% por la falta de empleo.] Felix sends, “Whatever I can...I don’t make that much money.” [Lo que yo pueda...yo no gano mucho dinero.] During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Brandon reported he sends home “only a small portion.” [Solo una porción pequeña.] Benicio stated:

When I have a job [my family does] well. When I don’t have a job they don’t do so well. The situation changes when I get less money, I still send some money

home...Naturally they have to buy food to eat and without money, my brother had to loan them money in order to get through this rough financial time. And then, I paid my brother back when I was able to send money home again.

Cuando yo tengo un trabajo [mi familia va] bien. Cuando yo no tengo un trabajo no les va tan bien. La situación cambia cuando recibo menos dinero, yo mando algún dinero a casa...Naturalmente tienen que comprar comida y comer, y sin dinero, mi hermano tuvo que prestar en orden de pasar por este tiempo difícil [financiero]. Y entonces le pague a mi hermano cuando pude mandar dinero a casa de nuevo.

Understandably, lack of employment and accompanying low income created strong tensions among participants. As evidenced by the various responses from the differing instruments, participants elicited their own reactions, such as sadness due to family separation and individual viewpoints on how both lack of employment and low income affected their personal and familial lives.

**Family separation.** Family separation emerged as another significant stressor of the study. On the stressor questionnaire, 10 out of 12 (Armando, Benicio, Brandon, Carlos, Cesar, Dino, Eliberto, Ernesto, Felix, and Francisco) indicated that separation from family and friends caused a great deal of anxiety. During the individual interview, Benicio said:

There are times that I want to cry. I love my wife and my children. I do not have any other option. I have to find a job so that I can support my family. I work since I was 10 years old in agriculture. Sadly we are low income. Even if we work really hard, we still cannot overcome all the financial problems.

Hay veces que quiero llorar. Amo a mi esposa y mis hijos. No tengo otra opción. Tengo que encontrar trabajo para poder soportar mi familia. He trabajado desde los 10 años en agricultura. Tristemente somos de poco dinero, aunque trabajamos muy duro todavía no podemos superar todos los problemas financieros.

Carlos felt anxious: “Honestly I feel a lot of anxiety, especially because I would like to bring my children to live here with me in the United States.” [Honestamente yo siento mucha ansiedad, especialmente porque yo quisiera traer a mis hijos a vivir aquí a

los Estados Unidos conmigo.] He also stated during the individual interview that, “Living here has affected my family psychologically and economically too.” [Estar viviendo aquí ha afectado a mi familia psicológicamente y económicamente también.]

Speaking about his wife during the follow-up questionnaire, Carlos shared:

Sadness is really a part of being apart for so long. Sometimes she calls me crying. I ask her what’s happened and ask why she is sad, and she says that she calls and calls sometimes and that I do not pick up the phone which is why her mind starts to think about all of the terrible things that could be happening to me. If a call does not go through, or something is wrong with the phone line, I return her call but she asks why I did not pick up the phone or return her call. So doubt, worry, and sadness are very deep on a daily basis when you are apart like this for so long.

Tristeza es de verdad una parte de estar aparte por tanto tiempo. A veces me llama ella llorando. Yo le pregunto qué ha pasado y pregunto porque esta triste, y ella dice que llama a veces y que no contesto el teléfono y por eso su mente comienza a pensar de todas las cosas terribles que pueden estar pasando a mí. Si una llamada no entra, o algo está mal con el teléfono, yo regreso su llamada pero ella pregunta por qué no contesto el teléfono o regreso su llamada. Entonces, duda preocupación, y tristeza son muy hondas diariamente cuando estás aparte así por tanto tiempo.

During his individual interview, Dino said that even though he was apart from his family, “We get along okay. It’s not the same as being with them at home.” [Nos llevamos bien. No es lo mismo que como estar con ellos en la casa.] During his individual interview, Eliberto said he felt “sad because they are not close to me. I miss them.” [triste porque no están cerca de mí. Los extraño.] The following quotes from the follow-up stressor questionnaire. Benicio stated:

My kids don’t realize how difficult it is for me being away for so long and they think that it is just a matter of choice for me to come and be with them, if even for a short while, when it is not this way at all. As a result, they begin to judge me and blame me for not being able to come. So when we do talk on the phone, they judge as if I purposely chose to hurt them and am trying to hurt them by leaving them behind.

Mis hijos no realizan lo difícil que es estar tan lejos por tanto tiempo y piensan que es decidía para mi ir estar con ellos, aunque por un tiempcito, cuando no es

así. Resulta que ellos comienzan a juzgarme y culparme por no poder ir. Entonces cuando platicamos por teléfono, ellos me juzgan como si decidí lastimarlos y trate de lastimarlos en dejarlos.

Ascención's separation made him feel, "very sad. I feel very sad, especially because they are so far away." [bien triste. Me siento bien triste, especialmente porque ellos están tan lejos.] Francisco felt "very lonely" [bien solo] away from his family. At the hiring corner, he also stated that it is hard for other people to imagine how it feels to leave loved ones behind knowing that it will be years before you ever see them again.

Dario shared the following:

I've been more years in the U.S. than with my family...You get very stressed out when you see your family suffering. Then, you have your child and you don't even know if you will be able to give your child money. When your children are sick or your family that you left behind in Mexico is sick or when they died, you can't help them. There are a lot of things, example: my brother died, my mother died and I couldn't do anything. My wife's father died and she couldn't do anything. All she did was to feel bad and cry. You cannot find peace; you will never see the people that died again; you will never talk to these people. Thinking of this day-by-day stresses you out.

Tengo más años en los Estados Unidos que con mi familia. Mucho stress cuando miras a tu familia sufriendo. Entonces tienes a tu hijo y ni sabes si le puedes dar dinero. Cuando tus hijos están enfermos o tu familia que dejaste en México está enferma o cuando se mueren, no puedes ayudarlos. Hay muchas cosas, por ejemplo: el padre de mi esposa murió y ella no podía hacer nada. Todo lo que hizo es sentirse mal y llorar. No puedes encontrar paz; nunca miraras a los que han muerto, jamás; nunca hablaras con ellos. Pensando de esto día tras día te trae estrés.

During the individual interview, Armando spoke at length about leaving his family behind and the negative effects it had on him:

Well, it was really sad. I left little children, my daughters, age four and six. When I left my home I wasn't sure if I wanted to leave but I had to realize that one of us [Armando or his wife] had to take the first step. I decided to leave so that I could give my children a better life. We are very poor back home, we don't have many resources and I had to do it so that I can give my children a better life. My children wanted to hold me back. They held me down by my legs while



telling me not to leave them but I told them that I was sacrificing so that they had a better life and then I just left. Leaving your children really hurts.

Bueno, era muy triste. Yo deje niños pequeños; mis hijas, años cuatro y seis. Cuando deje mi casa yo no estaba seguro si yo me quería ir pero tuve que realizar que uno de nosotros (Armando o su esposa) tenía que tomar el primer paso. Yo decidí irme para darle a mis hijos y esposa una mejor vida. Somos muy pobres en casa, no tenemos muchos recursos y yo tenía que hacerlo para poder darle a mis hijos una mejor vida. Mis hijos me agarraron. Me agarraron de mis piernas mientras diciéndome que no los dejara pero yo les dije que estaba sacrificando para que ellos tuvieran una vida mejor y entonces me fui. Dejar a tus hijos deberás duele.

During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Armando stated that being separated from his family for such an extended period of time was also very difficult:

The hardest part about being far away is the impact on my wife and children. This is the hardest, knowing your family is there and you are here far away from them. And sometimes here, without work, finding yourself in moments where you say to yourself, maybe it is better if I left this country and went back home because I am not working and my kids are growing up and I am not there to witness and enjoy it. You pass by a park and see the kids playing here with their fathers and mother walking slowly by enjoying themselves while you are here alone. This brings me much sadness and you just want to do the same with your children.

La parte más difícil de estando lejos es el impacto en mi esposa e hijos. Esto es lo más difícil sabiendo que tu familia está allí y tu estas aquí lejos de ellos. Y a veces aquí, sin trabajo, o encontrándote en momentos donde te dices a ti mismo, puede ser mejor si dejo este país y regreso a casa porque no estoy trabajando y mis hijos están creciendo y yo no estoy allí para ser testigo y disfrutarlo. Yo paso por un parque y veo los niños jugando con sus padres y mama caminando despacio disfrutando mientras yo estoy aquí solo. Estoy me trae mucha tristeza y solamente gustas hacer lo mismo con tus hijos.

Family separation was the source of some of the most negative emotional responses given by participants. Prolonged separation and lack of contact with loved ones for years at a time proved to be one of the greatest challenges for day laborers. Most day laborers had wives and multiple children and not just extended family. This made for an especially difficult experience for day laborers.

**Limited access to medical care.** Another stressor was lack of adequate medical care. On the stressor questionnaire, five out twelve participants (Ascención, Dario, Dino, Eliberto, and Francisco) indicated that a lack of medical care created a great deal of worry in their lives. In addition, in the field, Francisco stated, “I have never been to a doctor or a clinic while in the U.S.” [Yo nunca he ido a un doctor o clínica mientras vivo en los E.U.] Although some medical care is available to day laborers through free clinics, many of the participants were unaware of these services. Eliberto said, also in the field, “Being illegal makes it impossible to get medical care.” [ser ilegal hace imposible recibir cuidado médico.] During the individual interview, Armando said he had “only visited a health clinic once in seven years” [solo visite una clínica una vez en siete años] even though he suffered a debilitating injury on the job: “One time, I hurt my back. I was sick for three months. I cried from so much pain but I was never brave enough to go to the hospital because I didn’t know how. But thanks to God, I got better by myself.” [Una vez, me lastime mi espalda. Estuve enfermo por tres meses. Llore de tanto dolor pero nunca fui valiente lo suficiente para ir a un hospital porque no sabía cómo. Pero gracias a Dios, me mejore yo solo.] Regarding his lack of medical care, during the individual interview, Felix said, “I didn’t realize my lack of resources until this interview.” [yo no sabía la falta de mis recursos hasta esta entrevista.]

**Fear of deportation.** Fear of deportation emerged as the final stressor. On the stressor questionnaire, Armando, Ernesto, and Felix rated fear of deportation as an area of great anxiety. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Armando said:

[Fear of deportation] causes me to be scared. I feel scared all the time. If the time comes to be deported then there is nothing that can be done. I do recognize that a lot of us are living illegally in this country but we are not doing it because we

want to invade. We do it for necessity. It's not easier to be here in this country but we have more probability of succeeding. Work here is more difficult. One has to deal with the character of different supervisors and there are bad supervisors, but one has to just cope with the bad treatment. There is bad treatment, belittling, [and] racism. One time I was told that they are going to call the immigration and police to deport me. This supervisor did not want to pay me my earned wages. So he said he was going to call immigration on me. Inside me I was very scared and I was questioning why I had to deal with all this. He didn't want to pay me for work and there was a chance of getting deported.

[Miedo de deportación] me causa miedo. Me siento con miedo todo el tiempo. Si el tiempo viene para ser deportado, no hay nada que se puede hacer. Yo reconozco que muchos de nosotros estamos viviendo aquí ilegalmente en este país pero no los estamos haciendo porque queremos invadir. Lo hacemos por necesidad. No es más fácil estar en este país pero tenemos más probabilidad de éxito. Trabajo aquí es más difícil. Uno tiene que tratar con los caracteres de diferentes supervisores y hay malos supervisores, pero uno tiene que tratar con mal tratamiento. Hay mal tratamiento, desestimando, [y] racismo. Una vez me dijeron que iban a llamar la inmigración y policía para deportarme. Este supervisor no quería pagar lo que me debía a mí. Entonces me dijo que le iba a hablar a la inmigración. Dentro de mí tenía mucho miedo y preguntaba porque tenía que tratar todo esto. Él no quiera pagarme por mi trabajo y había la posibilidad de que me deportaran.

From the field notes, Felix commented that it was almost comical that people, (regardless of their migratory status) should have to be fearful of the very authorities that are supposed to protect them.

In addition, three quarters of the participants discussed extremely difficult border crossings. During the individual interview, Dino said, "I had to hide from the police in Mexico especially around the frontier and once here, I had to hide from immigration." [Yo me he tenido que esconder de la policía en México especialmente alrededor de la frontera y una vez aquí me escondí de la inmigración.] Ernesto echoed this sentiment and said that after evading corrupt Mexican authorities during the border crossing, once in the United States, he realized that he had to contend with immigration and local authorities, not to avoid being robbed, but to avoid deportation.

In order to deal with these significant five stressors, the participants devised a number of strategies. These coping strategies will be discussed in detail in research question number one. For research question number two, these stressors directly affected the participants' sense of self, physical and emotional health, and family relationships. For research question number three, the stressors made it necessary for participants to seek out support from social networks and community and family resources. The research questions are discussed in the next section.

### **Research Questions**

**Research question 1.** What specific strategies do day laborers use to cope with the daily challenges and stressors in their lives?

Day laborers used five primary strategies: relying on friends, taking active control, passive acceptance, keeping a positive attitude, and faith in God.

***Relying on friends.*** Relying on friends emerged as a coping strategy for several of the previously identified stressors.

In the field, Ernesto made it very clear that his friends and coworkers have been key allies in helping him work in America without speaking English. He noted that those who speak English even at a low level are looked to by other day laborers and are instrumental in the lives of non-English speaking day laborers. When feeling tension caused by not being able to speak English, Felix said during the follow-up stressor questionnaire that he turns to his friends: "I talk to my friends." [Yo hablo con mis amigos.] To cope with this same stressor, Francisco said during the group interview, "I rely on people that do speak English." [Yo me apoyo en las personas que hablan inglés.]

He said he relies on “Anyone. Employers, friends, coworkers, people on the street.”

[Cualquier persona. Empleados, amigos, compañeros de trabajo, personas en la calle.]

Friends also rely on one another to find work. In regard to coping with the stressor of lack of work, during the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Carlos stated that, “Usually when a friend tells me about a job then I try to take advantage of the opportunity and then I feel better.” [Cuando un amigo me dice de un trabajo yo trato de tomar ventaja de la oportunidad y después me siento mejor.] During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, when asked how he copes with the problem of not finding work, Ascención responded, “I work closely with friends and coworkers so we can stick together and find work together in groups.” [Yo trabajo cerca de amigos y compañeros de trabajo, así estamos juntos y cuando encontramos trabajo nos vamos todos en grupo.] Ascención said he depends on his friend “a lot.” [bastante.]

Day laborers not only stuck together when looking for work, they relied on one another to find housing. During the individual interview, Armando said he found housing “with friends. When you come to the U.S. you need to make friends. Then your friends help you find housing. You just ask around, ‘Do you know who rents a room?’ Then they answer, ‘Yes.’” [con amistades. Cuando uno viene a los E.U. uno necesita hacer amigos. Después tus amigos te ayudan a encontrar hogar. Tu les preguntas, ‘¿sabes de alguien que rente un cuarto?’ Después ellos responden que, ‘sí’.] Ernesto chose the Bay Area in particular because “I have the majority of my friends and acquaintances here that are also from Guatemala. They motivated me to come here.” [Yo tengo la mayoría de mis amigos y conocidos aquí, ellos también son de Guatemala. Ellos me motivaron a venirme aquí.] Ernesto also found housing through friends.

Benicio, too, chose the Bay Area because he had friends here. During the individual interview, he said, “One of my friends lived here also...My friend paid the first month of rent.” [Uno de mis amigos vive también aquí...Mi amigo me pago el primer mes de renta.] Carlos also found housing through friends. During his individual interview, he stated, “They have helped me a lot.” [ellos me han ayudado mucho.] Cesar also found housing through friends.

One way the participants coped with lack of income was by living with roommates, sometimes in very large groups, in order to save money. Armando lives with six roommates, Carlos and Ernesto each have four, Dino lives with seven, Eliberto lives with 11 other people, and Felix lives with 14. During the individual interview, when asked if he has his own room, Francisco responded, “Share, lots of us share.” [Compartimos, muchos de nosotros compartimos.] He added, regarding his housing conditions, “It’s good, but many people live in one space.” [Es Buena pero muchas personas viven en un espacio.]

Finally, in addition to relying on friends to help obtain life’s necessities, day laborers used their friends for moral support. When discussing the stressor of lack of employment during the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Francisco stated:

Friends and fellow workers notice that I am having a hard time and they try and make me laugh. So we are always trying to be jovial and make each other laugh to lighten the severity of the situation, especially while we are standing there on the side of the street for hours. So I mostly depend on my friends.

Amigos y compañeros notaron que se me hace difícil y ellos tratan de hacerme reír. Entonces siempre tratamos de llevarnos y hacernos reír para levantar la severidad de la situación especialmente mientras de que estamos allí parados por el lado de la calle por horas. Entonces yo dependo mucho en mis amigos.

Felix echoed this sentiment in the field. He made it very clear that it was absolutely crucial to keep a good attitude when working as a day laborer. He said that often, many days could go by without a hint of employment. Low morale often sets in and drags him down to the point of depression. Felix stated that this is one of the main reasons why laborers hang out in groups. In my field notes, I noted that day laborers talked to each other while waiting for employers to pick them up and laughter could be heard throughout the field observations. Dario stated in the field that in addition to this type of face-to-face moral support, some day laborers are able to capitalize on their English and eventually leave day labor work behind for more lucrative forms of work such as contracting and formal long-term employment. This inspires and gives day laborers hope. They see the opportunities available if they learn English. Finally, friends often provided more support than formal programs, as attested to by Carlos in the follow-up stressor questionnaire: “I have found out that I do not have the need to join a church or food bank because my friends are a great source of support. They support me a lot.” [Yo he encontrado que no tengo que ser parte de una iglesia o banco de comida porque mis amigos son una fuente de apoyo muy grande. Ellos me apoyan mucho.]

***Taking active control.*** In addition to relying on friends, taking active control of the situation and personally trying to find solutions to their problems emerged as another major coping strategy. To cope with lack of English, eight out of twelve participants (Armando, Brandon, Carlos, Cesar, Dario, Eliberto, Ernesto, and Felix) all indicated in their background interviews that they were trying to learn English. Carlos, who had taken some English classes in the U.S., added, “If I have the opportunity again, I would

like to learn how to speak English.” [Si yo vuelvo a tener la oportunidad, me gustaría aprender hablar inglés.]

When stressed about lack of money, Cesar stated during the follow-up to the stressor questionnaire that in order to cope, “I start thinking that it’s not good to be thinking of the bad. I go out and look for a job instead of thinking of the situation.” [Yo empiezo a pensar que no es bueno pensar en lo malo. Yo salgo a buscar trabajo en vez de empezar a pensar en la situación.] Similarly, to overcome the sadness he feels from being separated from his family, Benicio distracts himself. In the stressor questionnaire, he stated, “What I do, is to look for employment.” [Lo que yo hago es buscar empleo.]

During a field observation, Ascención said that when he first came to this country he was eager to make money and worked as hard as he could all of the time. He said he witnessed many day laborers taking the same approach but it often led to injury while on the job. If seriously injured, a day laborer literally is incapable of making money because he relies on his body as a means of support. He began to notice that there were those who took very good care of themselves and were very careful not to become injured. In another field observation, Carlos discussed this same issue. He said that some days laborers do not realize the dangers they encounter and risk really hurting themselves on the job. The lure of money and finishing a job quickly (so more money can be made doing more jobs) often puts a day laborer’s health in jeopardy. He stated that a laborer’s livelihood depends on his ability to stay healthy and good health puts him in an advantageous position to earn more money. During the background interview, Carlos indicated that he is also taking active steps to obtain medical care—he is applying for Medicare.



*Passive acceptance.* Although many participants actively took control of their stressful situations in order to cope, others took an opposite approach and coped through passive acceptance of their situation. Most employed a combination of both active and passive strategies. On the stressor questionnaire, half of the participants (Brandon, Benicio, Carlos, Cesar, Ernesto, and Felix) indicated that they coped with their difficult situation by accepting it and trying not to think about it. When asked how he coped with his lack of employment, Cesar responded during the follow-up stressor questionnaire, “I try not to think of my situation...Anyway, there is nothing much to do if you are in need. You have to stay strong and try to cope.” [Yo trato de no pensar en mi situación...Es que no hay mucho que se puede hacer cuando tienes necesidad. Tienes que ser fuerte y tratar de soportar.] When asked if he can cope with the problem of lack of English, Dario responded on the follow-up stressor questionnaire, “Not really...I cannot overcome this stressor because people that speak English are able to explain themselves and we don’t understand each other.” [La verdad que no...yo no puedo superar este estresor porque la gente que habla inglés puede explicarse pero no nos entendemos.] Regarding the possibility of attending school to learn English, during the background interview, Armando said, “No, I don’t think so. I am old.” [No, no lo creo. Ya estoy viejo.] Francisco, when asked during the background interview if he attended school said: “I don’t have the time. I’m always trying to find work.” [No tengo tiempo. Siempre estoy tratando de buscar trabajo.] To cope with lack of work, during the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Dino said, “Well, like I said if you don’t speak the language then you feel sad, sometimes I don’t go to work.” [Bueno, como dije si no hablas el lenguaje te sientes

triste, a veces yo no voy a trabajar.] All of these statements were delivered in a tone of resignation.

Armando uses passive acceptance to deal with the stressor of being separated from his family. During the follow-up to the stressor questionnaire, he said:

Time really helps. As time goes by, then it feels as if things, feelings get erased but what I usually feel that really happens is that your mind gets used to the situation. You just really have to be confident of what you are doing especially after you take the first step to stay, work hard, and work for your money.

Tiempo deberás ayuda. Mientras que el tiempo pasa, entonces se siente como que las cosas, sentimientos se borran pero lo que usualmente siento que pasa es que tu mente se impone a la situación. Deberás tienes que tener confianza en lo que estás haciendo especialmente después que tomas el primer paso a quedarte, trabajar duro, y trabajar por tu dinero.

He also used this strategy to cope with fear of deportation. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, he reported, “Time helps you overcome some of the fear but the fear is still there. While you are living in the U.S. illegally the fear will always be with you.” [El tiempo ayuda a sobre salir tus miedos, pero el miedo siempre está allí. Mientras tu vivas en los E.U. ilegalmente el miedo siempre estará contigo.]

***Keeping a positive attitude.*** While some participants appear to have given up in regard to improving their situation, others avoided negative behavior as a means to cope, and maintaining a positive attitude emerged as a strategy. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, when asked how he coped with worrying about his children’s education, Ernesto responded, “I try to think and stay positive so that I can be successful.” [yo trato de pensar y estar positivo así puedo sobre salir.] Carlos also had a positive attitude and has plans for the future. During the individual interview, he said:

As time passes by, I have found out that the opportunity is open to the person that is open-minded. I learned English. I went 18 months to school, and that has helped me to succeed. I started as a laborer and now I can work as a plumber...If

God and the country [United States] gives me the opportunity I do dream of becoming a U.S. citizen.

Mientras el tiempo pasa, yo he realizado que la oportunidad está abierta a la persona que tiene su mente abierta. Aprendí inglés. Estuve en la escuela por 18 meses y esto me ayudo a tener éxito. Comencé como un jornalero y ahora puedo trabajar como plomero. Si Dios y el país me da la oportunidad yo sueño de ser ciudadano.

Similarly, when discussing life as a day laborer, Cesar said during the follow-up stressor questionnaire, “Well, we have to fight hard so that we can succeed and stop thinking [about the bad] so that everything can go well.” [Bueno, tenemos que luchar fuerte para que podamos salir adelante y parar de pensar [acerca de lo malo] y así todo saldrá bien.] He also stated that, despite the distance, he and his family got along and that this ability to get along “depends that I have a good attitude. I left my country only to help them succeed.” [depende de que yo tenga una buena actitud. Yo deje mi país solo para salir adelante.] In the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Armando spoke extensively on the importance of positive thinking:

I always try to be positive. I tell myself that whatever I’m suffering or experiencing momentarily, it’s not going to last forever. The goal in my mind it’s to work hard in the present for the future. I like to think for the future...Anyway, there is nothing much to do if you are in need. You have to stay strong and try to cope. I really don’t complain. I have had good opportunities.

Yo trato de mantenerme positivo. Yo me digo que lo que estoy sufriendo o pasando por el momento, no va a durar para siempre. La meta en mi mente es trabajar duro en el presente para el futuro. Me gusta pensar por el futuro, además, no hay mucho que se puede hacer si estás en necesidad. Te tienes que mantener fuerte y tratar de aguantarlo. Yo no me quejo. Yo he tenido buenas oportunidades.

Other participants pointed out that they avoid destructive behavior such as drinking. On the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Cesar complained that:

A lot of people bring their old habits or bad addictions with them to this country like drinking alcohol, drug addiction, stealing, etc. Sometimes they want to

continue acting the old, bad way, and here it's different. People have to respect the law here in this country.

Mucha gente trae sus viejas costumbres o adicciones desde su país como tomar licor, adicción a drogas, robar, etc. A veces ellos quieren seguir portándose de esa manera, y aquí es diferente. La gente tiene que respetar las leyes aquí en este país.

Similarly, Armando said, "I get along with my family. I don't drink alcohol and I'm here to support my family." [Yo me llevo bien con mi familia. Yo no tomo licor y estoy aquí para apoyar a mi familia.]

***Faith in God.*** Finally, faith in God emerged as a crucial coping strategy. On the stressor questionnaire, five of 12 (Ascención, Benicio, Dario, Ernesto, and Felix) indicated that they attended church to cope with the anxiety and many challenges of day labor life. Regarding being away from his family, Francisco stated during the individual interview, "My main source of strength has been my faith. I think that God is great. Thanks to him, I am able to overcome this experience." [Mi mayor recurso de fuerza ha sido la fe. Yo creo que Dios es grandioso. Gracias a él, yo he podido sobrepasar esta experiencia.]

Also during the individual interview, Ascención stated that his faith helped him in the same way:

Well, it is difficult to not live close to my family. I feel it is very difficult but personally for me it has also been different. I have been able to overcome not living close to them. My main source of strength has been God. I think that nothing can be accomplished without God...I feel that I'm the happiest man. I do not have wealth but I have the luxury of saying that I'm God's son. We are all God's children but not all of us feel that way.

Es difícil no vivir cerca de la familia. Siento que es difícil pero personalmente para mí ha sido diferente. Yo he superado no vivir cerca de ellos. Mi mayor poder viene de Dios. Yo siento que nada se hace logra sin Dios. Yo siento que soy el hombre más feliz. Yo no tengo la riqueza pero tengo el lujo de decir que soy el hijo de Dios. Todo somos hijos de Dios pero no todos nos sentimos así.

Field notes indicated that Brandon spoke of his faith in God as a cornerstone of his existence. He said it would be impossible to cope with leaving his home behind had he not believed in the power of faith and his belief in God. As a result of his faith, Brandon said he has been able to do the impossible.

**Research question 2.** In what ways has working as a day laborer affected participants' sense of self, emotional and physical health, and family relationships?

*Sense of self.* For the purposes of this research, sense of self refers to agency versus lack of agency. Agency is defined as feelings of power, capacity or ability to influence events. Agency relates to how day laborers deal with the experiences of the world around them. As a result of these experiences, day laborers either reflected a sense of empowerment or a lack thereof. Living in the U.S. and working as a day laborer sometimes had major positive effects on the participants' sense of self. Some of the participants spoke of how their eyes were opened to a different way of life, such as Cesar. During one of my observations, Cesar discussed his becoming empowered as a result of coming to this country. Before he came to the U.S., he did not ever think about how other people lived in other parts of the world. He explained it as being sort of asleep and now his eyes were "wide open" [abiertos.] as a result of coming here.

Similarly, Carlos went from disempowered to empowered by living in the U.S. and working as a day laborer. The following response during the individual interview reveals that he feels he is living the American Dream:

When I left my homeland on April 13, 2000, I was in debt and had lost my father. Then I took my backpack and started walking North in search of the American dream and thanks to being here I was able to pay off the debt I had in my country, a debt that was truly stressing me out. Also, thanks to all the good people I met or found here in the United States, I have been able to find a way to support my children economically and I have been able to continue being successful in my

marriage. My mother became a widow and I am also able to help my mother every month by sending her \$50 so that she can survive in my country. I have all the desire to continue striving even if it takes me taking small steps at a time so that I can also help this country continue thriving. But on your way here to this country you will definitely find a lot of barriers, so much that you have to cross many boundaries and do things in this country without the authorization of the government. The reason why I disrespected the law by crossing here illegally was mainly because in my country there isn't enough employment.

Cuando dejé mi país el 13 de abril, 2000, yo debía y había perdido mi padre. Entonces tomé mi bolsa y comencé a caminar al norte en busca del sueño americano y gracias a estando aquí pude pagar lo debido en mi país, debido que deberás me causaba stress. También, gracias a toda la gente buena que he conocido o que he encontrado aquí en los estados unidos, yo he podido encontrar manera de mantener a mis hijos económicamente y yo he podido seguir teniendo éxito en mi matrimonio. Mi madre es viuda y también le estoy ayudando a ella cada mes mandándole 50 dólares por mes para que ella pueda vivir en mi país. Tengo el deseo de seguir luchando aunque se requiere que yo tome pasos chicos en cada momento y para que también apoye a este país. Pero aquí en este país vas a encontrar muchas barreras, tantas que tendrás que cruzar muchas líneas y hacer cosas en este país sin la autorización del gobierno. La razón que falte el respeto a la ley viniendo a este país ilegalmente fue principalmente porque en mi país no hay empleo.

Like Carlos, Dino also has been able to succeed in the U.S. My observational field notes indicate that although his family was far away, the money that he was sending was so needed that it almost made the sacrifice worth it. Young members of his family were able to go to school with full and complete funding as a result of his sending remittances. This made the entire family (including Dino) feel a sense of accomplishment that would not otherwise have been felt. As a result, the family is as united as ever around the goal of having him stay in the U.S. to financially provide for his family.

Another positive transformative effect of living and working in the U.S. was an increase in courage. Armando talked about a job painting a very tall building. The employer kept yelling up at him to hurry up. Finally, Armando collected his things and

climbed down and handed his things to the employer and confronted him about the way he was yelling at him and said that he was leaving. As he was walking away, the employer caught up with him and apologized. Since then, the employer and Armando have worked on many projects together and Armando has recommended other day laborers to work for the employer. Armando said that since the initial incident their relationship has become a good one. He said that he has learned to be more courageous and strong willed and now knows that he must express himself and be clear from the outset if he expects to gain respect. He said he would have never learned this in his native country as these job opportunities simply do not exist there.

Although some of the day laborers experienced positive effects regarding sense of self, others experienced negative ones. While Armando only pointed out the more positive aspects of a different and new culture, Benicio was more critical. In the field, he said he has noticed that here in the U.S., everyone has everything they need and a very high quality of life. Yet no one seems to be able to enjoy themselves or celebrate what they have achieved. Everything is in a constant rush. While in his country, it is the exact opposite—no one has any money and the quality of life is horrible. Everyone is in need. Yet, people and music can be heard almost every evening and on weekends when everyone comes out to dance and there is life in the streets: singing and dancing, families all together mingling, children playing in the streets until odd hours of the night. There are all kinds of commotion after the day is done. In the U.S. he sees hardly any people in the streets, especially late at night. Everything is just like a dead landscape. People in vehicles drive by so fast to get to work and then to get back home to fall asleep. He commented on the numbing speed of things here from cars, to people. He said that

someone said hello to him as they approached him but as he returned the hello, that person had already walked by. In his country, people have and take the time to stop and greet one another. It was very hard culturally for him to become accustomed to this. He feels very different now that he has seen this way of life and it will be hard to reintegrate back into his native country now that he has become less empowered as a result of seeing all of this.

***Emotional health.*** While the effects on sense of self were both positive and negative, the effects of working as day laborers affected participants' emotional health in a negative way only. There were no notable positive effects on emotional health from working as a day laborer.

Words like “depressed,” “sad,” and “anxious” peppered the participants' responses throughout the study and the following quotes come from the follow-up stressor questionnaire. Cesar indicated that lack of money affected his mental health negatively: “I start thinking that I don't have a job or money. It makes me feel damaged, hurt.” [Yo empezaba a pensar de que no tenía trabajo o dinero. Eso me hace sentir lastimado y herido.] Regarding lack of work, Francisco stated: “It wears heavily on my mind and it wears me down mentally. Makes me feel demoralized.” [Se siente muy pesado en mi mente y me hace sentir muy mal mentalmente.] Dario also said lack of work made him “depressed” [deprimido] and “uncomfortable.” [incomodo.] Regarding this same stressor, Ascención also said he often felt “depressed, I get very depressed.” [deprimido, me siento muy deprimido.] Carlos expressed similar views to this stressor: “Depressed. I get very depressed because I have a lot of responsibilities.” [Deprimido.



Yo me siento bien deprimido por que tengo muchas responsabilidades.] Ernesto indicated that his children's education worried him a great deal:

I feel depressed and at the same time anxious because I want to help them get educated especially since I didn't have the opportunity of going to school due to lack of resources. My parents couldn't help me continue going to school.

Yo me siento deprimido y al mismo tiempo ansioso porque yo quiero ayudarles con su educación especialmente que yo no tuve la oportunidad de ir a la escuela por falta de recursos. Mis padres no me pudieron ayudar para seguir a la escuela.

When asked about their inability to speak English, several day laborers again spoke of feeling depressed. During the follow-up to the stressor questionnaire, Dario said, "I feel depressed and with a lot of anxiety because I would like to know the language." [Yo me siento deprimido y con mucha ansiedad porque a mí me gustaría saber el lenguaje.] Ernesto felt the same way, stating, "I feel depressed. I feel I have no freedom, not being able to express myself. I would love to learn English. It's difficult because I am not able to understand the language to ask how to do the jobs." [Yo me siento deprimido. Yo siento que no tengo libertad, por no poderme expresar. Me encantaría aprender a hablar inglés. Es difícil porque no entiendo el lenguaje para poder preguntar de cómo hacer los trabajos.] Felix also said during the stressor questionnaire, that he felt "sad because I don't speak the language." [Triste porque yo no hablo el lenguaje.]

Finally, family separation caused participants a great deal of anguish. The following quotes come from the follow up stressor questionnaire. Ascención stated that he felt, "very sad. I feel very sad, especially because they are so far away." [muy triste. Yo me siento muy triste, especialmente porque ellos están muy lejos.] Carlos said being away from his family caused him to feel anxious. "Honestly I feel a lot of anxiety,

especially because I would like to bring my children to live here with me in the United States.” [Honestamente yo siento mucha ansiedad, especialmente porque me gustaría traer a mis hijos a vivir aquí conmigo a los Estados Unidos.] Dario added that, “You get very stressed out when you see your family suffering.” [te pones muy estresado cuando ves a tu familia sufriendo.]

Though none of the day laborers who participated in this study disclosed any problems with drinking, drugs, or other self-destructive behaviors as a coping strategy, these types of behaviors were witnessed at the informal hiring site by the researcher. Ascención suggested I return for at least one more observation at the site, this time on a Friday evening. While in the field, he explained that some of the experiences that day laborers underwent in coming to this country coupled with their experiences working as day laborers often result in emotional damage and trauma. As a result, some day laborers lose hope and turn to sex, drugs, and alcohol as a means to cope with their pain.

When I returned to the informal hiring site on a Friday evening, during my observation there, I saw a van circle the block twice. By the third time it had circled, a congregation of day laborers stood waiting for it to come to a halt. After an exchange of money between the driver and each worker, the laborers were allowed to board the van. Approximately 20 minutes later, the van returned to the hiring site, the men exited the van, and a new group of day laborers paid the driver and entered the vehicle. Although I could not see inside the van, Ascención had explained that the van would be occupied by prostitutes. I also witnessed an obvious display of drug paraphernalia being exchanged for money. What I witnessed confirms the information the day laborer had discussed regarding the use of sex and controlled substances as a means of coping. At the end of

the observation, I followed two day laborers departing the informal hiring site to the base of Third Avenue under the San Mateo Bridge where a group of people appeared to live in makeshift shelters. Interestingly, unlike the times I visited the informal hiring site during the day when the day laborers were looking for work, there were no police present on this Friday night at the site when these illegal activities took place.

**Physical health.** Physical health is more easily measured than mental health and four out of twelve of the participants had been injured while working as day laborers. During the individual interview, when asked if he had ever been injured on the job, Eliberto replied, “Sometimes. I’ve fallen, or hurt myself when hammering something.” [Algunas veces. Yo me he caído, o lastimado cuando estaba clavando algo.] Dario was also injured on the job. During the individual interview, he said: “I used to work in a company that cuts trees and some branches fell on my head. I had two surgeries on my head. I didn’t work for one year. I was receiving assistance due to the disability.” [Yo trabajaba en una compañía que cortaba árboles y unas ramas se cayeron en mi cabeza. Tuve dos cirugías en mi cabeza. No trabaje por un año. Estaba recibiendo asistencia por el hecho de mi incapacidad.] Armando was injured on the job as well. During the individual interview, he shared:

I was pulling, moving a refrigerator at an apartment. I think I used too much strength to the point of hurting my back...I was sick for three months. I cried from so much pain but I was never brave enough to go to the hospital because I didn’t know how. But thanks to God, I got better by myself...I used to cry because I couldn’t even raise my feet. I couldn’t even bend down to pick anything from the floor. I also continue working...I had to continue working because of necessity. One has to continue working...But actually when I used strength with my back, sometimes I lift something, my back hurts again. I feel like I’m still hurt.

Estaba jalando, moviendo un refrigerador en un apartamento. Yo pienso que use demasiada fuerza al punto donde me dolió mi espalda...yo estaba enfermo por tres

meses. Yo llore tanto de dolor pero yo tenía el valor de ir al hospital porque no sabía cómo. Pero gracias a Dios, yo mismo me mejore... yo lloraba porque no podía ni subir mis pies. Yo no me podía ni agachar a levantar algo del piso. Yo seguí trabajando...yo tenía que seguir trabajando por necesidad. Uno tiene que seguir trabajando. Pero actualmente cuando yo uso fuerza con mi espalda, a veces levanto algo, mi espalda me duele. Yo siento que todavía estoy lastimado.

Carlos sustained the most serious injuries of all the participants. A year before participating in this study, he fell from a tree while trimming it. During the individual interview, he stated:

I was cutting some trees in a house in the city of San Carlos, when the machine cut my security belt and I fell down, approximately three levels or floors down. I was hospitalized in Palo Alto Medical Center...I have had three complicated surgeries. I had one brain surgery, arm surgery, and my femur.

Estaba cortando árboles en una casa en la ciudad de San Carlos, cuando la maquina corto mi cinturón y me caí, aproximadamente tres pisos para bajo. Me internaron en el Centro Médico de Palo Alto...Yo he tenido tres cirugías complicadas. Una en el cerebro, brazo, y mi fémur.

Carlos is not the only one affected by his injury. Dangerous work can leave day laborers' families vulnerable as well:

I used to send money to support [my family in Guatemala] to pay for the schooling of my children but since the date of my accident until today I have not received any compensation, not even from my insurance...I'm head of a household. My children are also feeling my suffering.

Mandaba dinero a mi familia (mi familia en Guatemala) para pagar para la escuela de mis hijos pero desde la fecha de mi accidente hasta ahora yo no he recibido nada, ni de mi aseguranza...Yo soy la cabeza de mi casa. Mis hijos también sienten mi sufrimiento.

***Family relationships.*** As with emotional and physical effects, being away from the family took a negative toll on many of the family relationships of the participants. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Carlos described how his relationship with his children had been affected by his long absence:

Sometimes I can hear it in my kids voice in the tone that they take with me. They speak to me, at first, say hello, ask how I am, but one feels the emptiness in their voices as they try and pretend that everything is ok even when they are hurting inside. Then I become very sad and I try to explain to them the circumstances. I explain that I am trying to work to make a better life for them. Then they take some time listening in silence and begin to reason and say oh, ok, and I feel like they begin to understand the idea of why I left and their tone changes as if to say that they understand. And then I say, it's not because I wanted to go to hurt you, but out of necessity, this was our destiny.

A veces yo lo escucho en la voz de mis hijos en el tono que toman con migo. Hablan con migo, al principio, saludan, preguntan cómo estoy, pero uno siente lo vacío en sus voces mientras que tratan de pretender que todo está bien aunque duelen por dentro. Entonces me pongo muy triste y les trato explicar las circunstancias. Trato de explicar que estoy trabajando para que ellos tengan una vida mejor. Entonces toman tiempo escuchando en silencio y comienzan a razonar y dicen oh, ok, y siento que comienzan a entender la idea de porque yo me fui y sus tonos cambian como queriéndome decir que entienden. Y después digo, no me fui para lastimarte, pero fuera de necesidad, esto fue nuestro destino.

Like Carlos, Benicio's relationship with his children became tense. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, he said:

Sometimes my kids get so frustrated and angry that they accuse me of not loving them and that mommy and daddy are not together anymore but just not telling them. They feel the pain of my absence and think that mommy and daddy are simply not together anymore. So left to their own thoughts, they think the worst. And these are the effects on the children of being gone away for so long. These are the bumps that life gives.

A veces mis hijos se enojan y frustran tanto que me acusan de no amarlos y que mamá y papá ya no están juntos pero no les estamos diciendo. Ellos sienten el dolor de mi ausencia y piensan que mami y papi simplemente no están juntos. Si los dejamos en sus pensamientos ellos piensan lo peor. Y esto son los efectos en los hijos de estando fuera por tanto tiempo. Esto son los golpes que la vida da.

During my observations, Francisco stated that one cannot imagine what it is like to leave a loved one behind knowing that it will be years before they ever see each other again. Eliberto explained that emotionally, family separation has definitely taken a toll on him:

[My family] knew that I was hurting emotionally from the separation. When I would call home, my wife would cry over the phone. She would tell me how much she wanted to be there to take care of me and heal my pain.

[Mi familia] sabía que yo estaba en dolor emocionalmente por la separación. Cuando yo hablaba a casa, mi esposa lloraba por teléfono. Ella me decía cuanto quería estar allí conmigo para cuidarme y sanar mi dolor.

The separation also created tension in Eliberto's relationship with his wife. In the follow-up stressor questionnaire, he said:

Having my wife so far does cause tension between us. There are things that pass through her mind from being gone for so long. It is as though she thinks that I am with another woman. And then, I worry about what will happen to my kids if we divorce! I tell her that if there is another woman, my children will suffer. Then, we both pray to God that we never have to pass through this. But she recognizes that because she is human, this is part of the effect of being so far apart. So these are normal tensions, and are difficult to pass.

Tener a mi esposa tan lejos si causa tensión entre nosotros. Hay cosas que pasan por su mente por estar lejos por tanto tiempo. Es como si ella piensa que yo estoy con otra mujer. ¡Y después me preocupo sobre lo que le pasara a mis hijos si hay divorcio! Yo le digo que si hay otra mujer, mis hijos sufrirán. Entonces, los dos pedimos a Dios que nunca pasaremos por esto. Pero ella reconoce que porque es humana, esto es parte del efecto de estar tan aparte. Entonces estas son tensiones normales y son difíciles para pasar.

After many years of constantly missing his family, this has worn on his emotions and he has often gotten sick as a result. He believes that one can become ill from the constant exposure to emotional devastation and that at some point, it can be harmful to the individual.

In the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Armando spoke of the negative effects on his family of his being away. However, he also stated that these negative effects had made him and his family more resilient:

The people in my community back home are fortunate to never have gone through a separation like the one our family is experiencing. They are much more united into strong units and often have several generations living under one roof. As a result, they say that we are a family that is too separated because we can't even sit

at the dinner table together to eat. And this really hurts me and my family to have to hear. Some in the community actually ask why so much time has passed without seeing each other. Then they begin to say that maybe I have found another woman and then my wife gets scared until I calm her down and reassure her. That she has to trust in me without thinking what the community is saying. I explain that I know it's difficult and that I also have to trust in her as well. And although this ultimately brings us together, the community has been hard on us for me leaving my family. This has caused us both to become very strong emotionally in order to be able to resist what others in the community are saying about us.

La gente en mi comunidad en casa tiene la fortuna de nunca haber pasado por una separación como la que nuestra familia está pasando. Ellos son mucho más unidos en unidades fuertes y hasta tienen varias generaciones viviendo abajo de un techo. Resulta en que ellos dicen que nosotros somos una familia que está muy separada porque no podemos ni sentarnos en la mesa a comer juntos. Y esto de veras me duele a mí y a mi familia escuchar. Unos en la comunidad actualmente preguntan por qué ha pasado tanto tiempo sin vernos. Entonces comienzan a decir que a la mejor yo he encontrado a otra mujer y entonces mi esposa se espanta hasta que la calmo y la aseguro. Que ella me tiene que confiar sin pensar lo que dice la comunidad. Le explico que yo sé que es difícil y que yo tengo que confiar en ella también. Y aunque esto últimamente nos acerca más, la comunidad ha sido muy dura conmigo por haber dejado a mi familia. Esto ha causado que los dos nos ágamos muy fuertes emocionalmente para poder resistir lo que los de la comunidad están diciendo de nosotros.

Despite developing a depression as a result of the separation from his family and loved ones back home, Armando felt he had no choice but to stay in the U.S. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, he shared:

After a year of being here I wanted to go back to my country. I couldn't stay and get used to being here. I was making money but, God, it was so hard to choose between money and family. I had to tell myself, that it was important to stay here and succeed. It was my dream to come here to work hard for money to help my family so I convinced myself to stay here.

Después de un año de estar aquí quería regresar a mi país. No podía quedarme e imponerme a la vida aquí. Yo ganaba dinero pero Dios mío era tan duro escoger entre dinero y familia. Me tuve que decir que era importante quedarme y tener éxito. Era mi sueño venir y trabajar duro por dinero para ayudarle a mi familia y yo mismo me convencí quedarme.

Armando also said that his wife tried to ease his burden:

When my wife became aware of my depression, she tried to lift my spirits. She said do not worry about us and that everything is fine, even though I knew that she was saying this because of my depression. Although I knew she was feeling lonely too, she would keep on lifting my spirits even if her spirits were down, in order not to add more to my load.

Cuando mi esposa se dio cuenta de mi depresión, ella trato de levantar mi ánimo. Ella dijo que no me preocupara de ellos y que todo está bien, aunque yo sabía que ella decía esto por mi depresión. Aunque yo sabía que ella también se sentía sola también, ella seguía dándome animo aunque su ánimo también estaba bajo para no ponerme más a mi carga.

Being away from his family also affected Armando physically. He suffered from “a lot of headaches. I was always thinking about my family’s well being. How were my children doing? So, the body can’t take so much stress.” [mucho dolores de cabeza. Siempre estaba pensando en el bienestar de mi familia.]

**Research question 3.** What social networks and community/family resources are available to day laborers to support their needs?

Resources that participants relied on for support to deal with the many stressors they faced included a social network made up of friends, employers, and members of the community. Finally, they relied on free community resources and family ties.

***Social networks.*** The informal social safety net day laborers relied on was made up of friends, employers, and even complete strangers. As outlined in detail in research question number one, friends emerged as a huge source of support and participants relied on friends to help them in a variety of ways, from finding jobs, to finding housing and sharing housing expenses, to providing moral support.

Employers also played a role in this informal social safety net. Dario stated that many employers speak both English and Spanish and they had been able to help him cope



with the challenges of not being able to speak the language. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, Ascención stated that:

I have had the good fortune of finding employers now and again who have been fabulous people. When they find you are a good worker, then they look to you again and again. And then they begin to help you in other areas like finding further employment when the job you are doing with them runs out.

He tenido buena fortuna de encontrar empleadores de vez en cuando que son fabulosos. Cuando ven que eres un buen trabajador, te buscan varias veces. Y entonces te comienzan a ayudar en otras áreas como encontrando empleo cuando el trabajo que estás haciendo se acaba.

Armando also found employers to be a good source of support. In the field, he said that one employer in particular, pleased with his work on an initial job, rehired him regularly.

Sometimes, complete strangers reached out to day laborers needing assistance, as during the follow-up to the stressor questionnaire, Ascención explained: “People who you never [imagined] come out and just come through for you. Like people in the community who you would never think to count on suddenly come out of nowhere and help you.”

[Gente que nunca te imaginas sale y están ahí para ti. Como gente en la comunidad que tú nunca te pensarías en contar con ellos, de repente salen y te ayudan.] Francisco shared an example of this type of support during the follow-up questionnaire:

Surprisingly, people try to help when they see you in the community. But that is once in a while. But it does happen time and again. It’s like they are aware of us and try to do what they can to help. Maybe just by translating at a counter, at a store, or if someone is bothering us. Once, some people were saying things to us on the street corner and a stranger just out of nowhere told them to leave us alone.

Con sorpresa, la gente trata de ayudar cuando te ven en la comunidad. Pero eso es solamente de vez en cuando. Pero si sucede de vez en cuando. Es como si saben de nosotros y tratan de hacer lo que pueden para ayudar. A lo mejor solamente traducen mientras un paga en una tienda, o si alguien nos está molestando. Una vez, una gente nos decía cosas en la esquina de la calle y de repente salió un extranjero y les dijo que nos dejaran en paz.

*Community/family resources.* Free community resources also emerged as a major resource that the participants relied on. These included medical providers, churches, and public parks. Medical providers were a source of support for those participants who were aware of their services. During the background interviews, half of the participants (Armando, Benicio, Brandon, Carlos, Dario, and Ernesto) indicated that they were aware of the existence and availability of these clinics. Brandon, Dario, and Ernesto had each visited a county health clinic in the past year and Dario had visited a free dentist in the past year. During the group interview, Ernesto, Dario, and Carlos discussed medical clinics. Ernesto stated he was “aware of those services.” [Estaba enterado de esos servicios.] Dario was also aware of these services, and stated:

I am also aware of the same program because with money or without money they will help you...My children, my wife and I have been helped there. It makes me and my family feel very trusting because we can go and ask for a service and receive help from a hospital.

Yo también se del mismo programa porque con dinero o sin dinero ellos te ayudan...mis hijos, mi esposa y a mí nos han ayudado allí. Me hace a mí y a mi familia sentir con confianza porque podemos ir y preguntar por un servicio y recibir ayuda del hospital.

Dario added that these services were available “even if you are undocumented.”

[aunque seas indocumentado.] Carlos made similar comments during the group interview:

I am aware of the program in San Mateo. It’s so necessary especially for a person that is on disability. You can find the support from the medical staff and the medicine. It makes me feel like a worthy person. The doctors are not looking at your skin color or social class. They will help you right in the moment you need to be helped.

Yo sé del programa en San Mateo. Es tan necesario especialmente para una persona incapacitada. Puedes encontrar el apoyo de los médicos y la medicina.

Me hace sentir que valgo la pena. Los doctores no miran el color de tu piel o clase social. Te ayudaran en el momento que necesitas ayuda.

In addition to medical resources, several participants depended on the Church.

On the stressor questionnaire, Ernesto indicated that he attended church as a coping strategy when he worried about his children's education: "I go out or I go to church." [Yo salgo o voy a la iglesia.] Ascención, Benicio, Dario, Ernesto, and Felix each indicated on the stressor questionnaire that they attend church to cope with being away from their families.

Carlos rated his inability to speak English as a source of great anxiety and said it makes him feel depressed. During the follow-up stressor questionnaire, when asked how he coped with this issue, he responded that in his free time, he rests "and also [tries] to go to the park." [y también trato de ir al parque.] Ernesto also went to the park to cope: "I go out to get distracted. I go to the parks...I go out." [Yo salgo para distraerme. Voy a los parques...yo salgo.]

The final major resource that emerged was family resources. Some of the day laborers who relied on this resource for support spoke of the importance of extended family. For example, during the individual interview, Felix said that he came to the U.S. "Because my brother in law and friends live here." [Porque mi cuñado y amigos viven aquí.] He also found housing "with the help of my brother-in-law." [Con la ayuda de mi cuñado.] Similarly, Dino during the individual interview, said he chose The Bay Area because he "had some family here." [tengo familia aquí.] He also indicated that he lived with his cousins. Eliberto also found housing through family members. Unlike the vast majority of the participants, Dario lives with his immediate family here in the U.S. He indicated that he looks to his wife and children for support in order to cope with day-to-

day stressors such as lack of English and lack of work. The majority of the participants who lived away from their families were in constant regular contact with them via letters and phone calls. During the individual interview, Francisco stated, “I have been able to deal with the distance by keeping in touch with them [my family].” [He podido superar con las distancia porque siempre me mantengo en contacto con ellos.] On the stressor questionnaire, seven out of twelve (Brandon, Benicio, Carlos, Cesar, Eliberto, Ernesto, and Felix) indicated that they regularly telephoned or wrote home to cope with the tension caused by separation. Francisco called his family every day. Ascención said, “I write and call [my family] often.” [Yo le escribo y le llamo a mi familia seguido.] Eliberto’s family called him “every eight days” [cada ocho días] and they talked “for 30 minutes.” [por 30 minutos.] Sometimes he wrote them as well.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided information on the background of participants in the study, identified stressors faced by day laborers in the study, identified coping strategies employed by subjects, and reported study findings per the three research questions. Each research question examined a different dimension of stressors and coping mechanisms affecting the subjects in the study: coping mechanisms that were common to the practice of day labor; how subjects’ sense of self was affected by their lives as undocumented day laborers; and how subjects employed social and community/family resources to cope with the many stressors of being a day laborer.

Twelve day laborers participated in the study: 10 Guatemalan males and two Mexican males. All participants were undocumented and living illicitly in the United States. All participants spoke Spanish fluently and spoke only very basic English. They

possessed only an elementary school level education, and the average age for participants was 38 years, with ages ranging from 28 to 53 years. The average stay in the United States for all subjects was six and a half years with stays ranging from one year to 17 years. All subjects report being underemployed. All participants were married and 11 had children.

**Stressors.** The stressors the participants reported experiencing were lack of English, lack of employment/low income, family separation, lack of medical care, and fear of deportation.

The absence of fluency in English limited the job prospects of subjects and subordinated them to parties acting as interpreters. Subjects could never be certain of what they were being told in English, whether a translator was reliable, or whether their lack of English skills would serve to alert people and legal agencies that the subjects were in the United States illegally. The accuracy of information was especially critical concerning payment for services.

Like lack of English, lack of employment/low income also caused a great deal of anxiety. Participants worked fewer hours than they desired, and this lack of employment led to low income. This low income in turn affected families back home, as participants who sent money back home to their families struggled to do so.

Separation from those families back home emerged as another critical stressor. Not only did participants miss their families back home, they also worried about them and their well-being. In addition, the responsibility of sending remittances home, and the knowledge that the remittances represent a genuine and critical economic advantage to the family worried each subject holding the responsibilities of being the economic

provider for their household. Participants also spoke of feeling anxious, sad, lonely, and stressed by their separation.

Although the final two stressors, lack of medical care and fear of deportation, affected fewer participants, their effects created a lot of anxiety in those participants who experienced them. Some participants had rarely, if ever, visited a health clinic, and many were unaware of the existence of free clinics. Fear of deportation also caused anxiety and the majority of participants also spoke of extremely difficult border crossings.

**Research question 1.** What specific strategies do day laborers use to cope with the daily challenges and stressors in their lives?

Day laborers used five primary strategies: relying on friends, taking active control, passive acceptance, keeping a positive attitude, and faith in God.

Relying on friends emerged as coping strategy across the board for the stressors. Friends talked to each other about their worries, and gave each other moral support. They helped each other find jobs. They relied on each other to find housing, and they also lived together in large groups to help share the high costs of housing in the Bay Area.

In addition to relying on friends, participants also coped by taking active control of their situations and personally trying to find solutions to their problems. Some spoke of trying to learn English. Others said when they are worried about money or their families, they look for work.

Although some participants take an active approach to dealing with anxiety, others passively accept it and this emerged as another coping strategy for the stressors of lack of English, lack of employment/low income, family separation, and fear of

deportation. Participants who employed this strategy tried to not think about their situations. They indicated that they were helpless to change their situations.

While some participants simply accept their difficult circumstances and seem to have given up, others tried to both avoid negative behavior and keep a positive attitude as a means of coping with stress. These participants felt that success was dependent upon their attitudes. None of the participants reported a problem with destructive behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse, and some stated outright that they avoid these types of behaviors.

Faith in God emerged as the final coping mechanism. Several participants attended church to cope with the anxiety associated with living as day laborers. These participants also cited God as a great source of strength.

**Research question 2.** In what ways does working as a day laborer affect participants' sense of self, emotional and physical health, and family relationships?

Working as a day laborer can affect sense of self; be damaging to mental and physical health; and take a heavy toll on family relationships.

The ability of a subject to develop a strong and stable sense of self resulted from several factors: the creation of new perspectives resulting from living abroad, a sense of accomplishment that their sacrifices are truly helping their families living in home countries, and the development of positive feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem resulting from their successfully overcoming numerous obstacles to working in the U.S. as illegal laborers. The creation of positive feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem allowed subjects to be more proactive in locating work and defending their interests with employers.

Life in the U.S. also had negative effects on sense of self. One participant felt disillusioned with life here, wondered how he would reintegrate back into his native country, and fell a sense of disempowerment from living and working here.

Unlike sense of self, which was affected both positively and negatively, the emotional health of participants was affected negatively only. Participants spoke of feeling depressed, anxious, uncomfortable, and damaged in regard to their circumstances of living and working as day laborer. Family separation, for example, caused a great deal of anguish.

Like emotional health, physical health was also affected negatively from working as a day laborer. Several participants had been injured on the job—two so severely that they each required multiple surgeries.

Similarly, separation took a toll on many of the family relationships of participants. Being so far from their families cause tension between some participants and their wives, and participants and their children.

**Research question 3.** What social networks and community/family resources are available to day laborers to support their needs?

Resources that participants relied on for support to deal with the many stressors they faced included a social network made up of friends, employers, and members of the community. Finally, they relied on free community resources and family ties.

A reliance on informal social networks equaled or surpassed the importance of formal organizational and institutional resources available to the subjects. It is in this area where friendships were such a vital sense of support to my participants. For my participants friends meant an immediate lifeline in times of dire need or crisis. Strong



Friendships also meant a link to employment, income and often ensured a general sense of well being in keeping each other's spirits up during difficult times. While religion and faith served as critical emotional sources of sustenance, friends and even employers acted to mitigate concerns regarding material needs. An additional category of social support resulted from what can be described as the kindness of strangers. Many subjects referenced assistance from strangers as a source of support.

The most significant community resources of support were free medical clinics, churches, and public open spaces and parks. Medical clinics were a source of physical support for work injuries and illnesses. Churches provided a place for participants to practice their faith. Parks provided a source of free entertainment and a respite from day-to-day stressors.

Most subjects relied on extended family in the United States for assistance in becoming settled here and for emotional and material support during their stay in the United States. The extended family models appear to expand into fictive realms including non-relatives.

## Chapter V

### Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

*It's not easier to be here in this country but we have more probability of succeeding-*

*Armando*

This chapter is oriented around creating a climate of success for day laborers through discussion of the issues that arose out of the findings of this study. The conclusions and recommendations of this study are given in order to create a greater probability of success for this vulnerable population as a whole. As this study has shown, there are significant obstacles that day laborers encounter which if discussed and addressed can become a key component to success for a group that struggles on a daily basis.

This chapter is divided into four parts: part one, a restatement of the problem; part two, the purpose statement for this study; part three, a discussion section consisting of stressors, and research questions; and part four, recommendations for policy makers, future research, and reflections of the researcher.

#### **Restatement of the Problem**

More research is needed to better understand day laborers and the stressors they encounter in their day-to-day lives. Although previous research exists on day laborers, (Valenzuela, 2000; Valenzuela et al., 2006; Michel, 2008; Walter et al., 2002), few studies actually focus specifically on how day laborers cope with their environment. Very little literature exists specifically on coping strategies of day laborers. Although Magaña and Hovey (2003) did study stressors and coping strategies of migrant workers, their population was made up of farm workers in the Midwest, not day laborers.

Therefore, further research is required in order to thoroughly examine the coping strategies of day laborers.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand the coping strategies that day laborers utilized on a daily basis. In addition, this study aimed to give voice to day laborers. This study also attempted to investigate stressors that day laborers experience, such as lack of English, lack of employment, and family separation, in order to ultimately reveal the strategies that day laborers employed in dealing with their environment.

### **Theoretical Rationale**

By using LatCrit as an analytical lens, we can better understand the strong hostility aimed toward migrant day laborers by the host country nationals they serve. LatCrit recognizes that these workers have become a lower, subordinate class. This lower status is brought about by misconceptions relating to their language, ethnicity, education, and social status. By using the LatCrit lens, cultural contributions, highlighting the importance of family, language, and social interaction, are understood to be valuable, necessary components in understanding people of color. LatCrit theory leads us to begin to understand day laborers' need to create coping methods to deal with their inherently hostile climate.

**Stressors.** This study found that day laborers face a large number of stressors in their daily lives: lack of English, lack of employment/low income, separation from family, lack of medical care, and fear of deportation. The stressors in this study helped to underpin and drive the later discussion towards the end of answering the research questions.

***Lack of English.*** In this study, lack of English emerged as a major stressor that affects day laborers. In the small number of other studies that looked at stressors affecting migrant workers (Magaña & Hovey, 2003; Michel, 2008; Walter et al., 2002), lack of English also emerged as a notable stressor. Magaña and Hovey (2003) found that lack of English caused problems for migrant farm workers in many different areas of their lives. The workers had difficulty communicating with health care providers, social agency workers, and retail clerks at shopping centers. As a result, nearly all of the participants who cited lack of English as a stressor relied on their children and others to interpret for them in these settings. Additionally, only a small number of participants had taken English classes. Walter et al. (2002) also found that lack of English was one factor that prevented day laborers from seeking the medical care they required after being injured on the job.

In my study, however, lack of English was the top stressor, cited by 11 of the 12 participants as the source of the greatest deal of stress. Other studies that cited lack of English as a source of anxiety for migrant workers and day laborers did not rank language barriers as the top stressor. For example, Magaña and Hovey (2003) found that language barriers caused a great deal of stress for men (female migrant farm workers cited lack of English as a major stressor almost half as frequently as their male counterparts), but was not the top stressor. It was the third most cited stressor for men in that study.

Michel (2008) found that lack of English was a stressor, however, she concluded that the greatest stressors day laborers faced were lack of work, lack of money, and fear of deportation.

In my study, Dario, Armando, Francisco, and Dino all seemed to have given up on speaking English. Although the inability to speak English seems like an insurmountable obstacle to these men, they did have the courage to embark on the dangerous border crossing, immigrate to a foreign country, and undertake any type of work available in order to improve their lives and the lives of their families. Several participants did convey a desire to learn English, but they could not afford fees for English classes and they needed to expend most of their energy simply surviving here either working or looking for work.

Beyond the natural frustrations that naturally come from an inability to communicate in English in a foreign land, the participants themselves did not feel valued and experienced a sense of invalidation per LatCrit principles. Lack of English was a likely top stressor for my participants because their primary language, Spanish, was not validated in the American context. Yosso (2006) discusses lack of validation in American society, and language, or lack of English, is a primary way in which the dominant society leaves people of color feeling that their potential contributions (their language) are not validated. This type of invalidation was arguably a big part of the source of the stress that day laborers in my study experienced surrounding their lack of English. In other words, this invalidation was why lack of English caused them to feel so stressed out. When looked at through this lens, it is understood why a day laborer's inability to speak English is such a stressor. LatCrit theory recognizes the influence of the dominant culture and within that dominance, language plays an important role, (Montoya, 2002; Johnson, 2004). The fact that my participants only spoke Spanish and did not speak the dominant language put them in an inferior position vis a vis the

dominant language and as a result, they experienced much stress due to their lack of English.

*Lack of employment/low income.* Lack of employment/low income emerged in this study as another source of great anxiety for day laborers. Ten of the 12 participants indicated that they wanted to work more hours than they had been working. Naturally, a lack of employment leads to a low income. This finding is in keeping with other studies. Valenzuela et al. (2000, 2006), Walter et al. (2002), Magaña and Hovey (2003), and Michel (2008) all found that lack of employment and lack of income were significant sources of stress for migrant workers. Valenzuela et al. (2006) found that day laborers did not earn more than \$15,000 a year and survived below the federal poverty level. Similarly, Magaña and Hovey (2003) also found that day laborers earned very little money and in fact had difficulty buying the bare necessities of life, such as food and clothing. They also had trouble affording medical care.

The few hours my participants worked contrasts starkly to the popular image of the high tech worker in the Bay Area who works more hours in one day than some day laborers work in one week. The lack of income resulting from lack of employment leads to economic hardships for day laborers living here. They earn very little money, they often have difficulty paying for the basics such as housing, and they can't send home remittances which, for most of them, was their sole purpose in coming here. As a result, they are not the only ones to suffer. These men come here to help their families and ironically, the families are in some cases no better off.

One reason lack of employment/lack of income emerged as a lesser source of anxiety than lack of English may be due to the location of my study. In other areas of the

country, where the economy may be weaker, lack of employment/lack of income might emerge as the top stressor. Because the economy where this study was conducted may have a greater resiliency against economic downturns, work may be more plentiful, thus moving lack of English into the top source of stress when compared to lack of employment/lack of income.

***Family separation.*** In addition to lack of English and lack of employment/low income, family separation also affected the participants of this study to a great degree. Eight out of 12 participants rated family separation as a major stressor. Participants reported feelings of sadness, loneliness, and anxiety, and related painful experiences of leaving their families, not knowing when they would be able to return and see them again. Distance from those we love can be extremely painful.

Other studies corroborate family separation as a stressor. Walter et al. (2002) and Magaña and Hovey (2003) found that family separation caused a great deal of anxiety in migrant workers. Walter et al. (2002) concluded that family separation strained family relationships, and stated that wives back home can become suspicious of their husbands living and working in the United States, accusing them of negative behaviors ranging from alcoholism to marital infidelity. Magaña and Hovey (2003) found separation from family affected migrant workers profoundly. In fact, in that study, separation from friends and family was the top stressor for men, identified by more than half of male migrant workers.

In many cases, day laborers did not know when they would return to their families. In my study, Dario said immigrants like himself make a mistake in coming to the U.S. They are often unable to support their families as they had hoped. If the goal is

to earn enough money so they can return home to pay for their children's education or buy land, that return home can be a long way off in the future, given their dismal earnings. In addition, dangerous border crossings make returning home to family unlikely. To return for a visit can mean returning home for good since getting back into the U.S. is very difficult. As a result, day laborers can go for years and years without visiting their families.

Through the use of personal stories and dialogue this research revealed the devastating effects of family separation on the participants in my study. Personal experiences and stories are both appropriate and valid in understanding people of color (Yosso, 2006). When applying the LatCrit principle of storytelling and personal narratives in validating and understanding my participants, I found that the reason family separation was such a stressor was because of the severe emotional impact that separation over long periods of time had on them. All of the participants in my study told heartfelt stories about spending years away from their families and this prolonged separation was the cause of great stress.

*Limited access to medical care.* Although fewer participants cited lack of medical care as a stressor than they did other stressors such as family separation, five of the 12 participants did indicate that this stressor caused a great deal of anxiety in their lives. Other studies support this finding. Magaña and Hovey (2003) for example, found that the serious health consequences that often result from migrant workers' difficult and dangerous jobs caused a significant amount of stress. Valenzuela et al. (2006) found a high incidence of workplace injury. Approximately 20% of the laborers in that study had been injured on the job, yet more than half of them never received the health care they



needed, either because they lacked insurance or their employer evaded the law and refused to implement workman's compensation insurance. Walter et al. (2002) also found a high rate of injury and a low rate of access to medical care. The reasons cited ranged for low access resulted from a number of factors: fear of deportation, language barriers, an unawareness of available services, the perceived belief that visits would cost money, and the desire to continue working and generate income rather than spend time making a visit to a medical clinic, even a free one. In Michel's (2008) study, lack of medical care was one of the top stressors cited by day laborers. Except for that study, none of the other studies in the literature closely examined how the lack of medical care resulting from on-the-job injuries affected day laborers' anxiety levels. Other studies focused more on the injuries themselves and the results of those injuries such as the inability to work and send home remittances. My study, on the other hand, directly examined the lack of access to medical care and the effects that it had on day laborers.

The low social status of day laborers in my study directly related to their lack of medical care. Walter et al. (2002) found a direct relationship between this low status and day laborers' interactions (or lack of) with medical resources and their experiences of on-the-job injuries. The low social status of my participants as undocumented workers made them more likely to accept dangerous jobs that led to injury. When they were injured, undocumented status prevented them from seeking medical care out of fear of deportation and the need to continue working, even when injured, thus making lack of medical care a stressor. The high cost of medical care in the U.S. acted as another deterrent that prevented day laborers from seeking care. Some of my participants were aware of medical care available but their lack of income prevented them from accessing it. My

participants' inability to command a living wage stemmed in part from their low social status and placed them at a disadvantage when compared to those who could afford medical coverage, thus causing them much concern and worry surrounding lack of medical care.

*Fear of deportation.* Finally, fear of deportation was reported as a stressor. Three quarters of the participants in my study rated fear of deportation as a stressor. Participants reported having to physically hide from authorities as well as continually having to behave evasively during their day-to-day search for employment.

Michel (2008) also found that fear of deportation ranked high as a source of tension among participants. The reason day laborers feared deportation is that they would have difficulty returning to the U.S., thus destroying their chances of supporting their families by working here. Walter et al. (2002) also found that increased border security made the risks of returning home very high. Day laborers cannot easily return home, due to tightened immigration restrictions, thus prolonging their separation from their loved ones.

The reason why fear of deportation ranked so high among the participants in my study was because it posed a threat to their continued presence in the United States. The participants needed to provide for their families. During the stressor questionnaire, Armando confirmed this need to provide for his family when stating that he did not come to the U.S. to invade, but rather as an act of necessity.

Immigration status is one way in which people of color are marginalized (Montoya, 2002; Johnson, 2004). LatCrit scholars submit that immigration status must be considered when looking at U.S. race relations. Because my participants were

undocumented, they were marginalized and had to live in constant fear of deportation. Immigration status, accent, and surname are just a few of the aspects by which society discriminates against people of color (Montoya, 2002; Johnson, 2004) and in the case of my participants, immigration status kept them living in perpetual fear of being apprehended and expelled.

**Research questions.** The following is a discussion of the research questions for this study. The stressors in this study served as a foundation by which to answer the research questions. The first research question discusses the coping strategies used by participants in this study. The findings discussed under the first research question are reliance on friends and keeping a positive attitude. The second research question discusses how working as a day laborer has affected participants' sense of self emotional/physical health, and family relationships. The findings discussed under the second research question are taking active control and passive acceptance. The third research question explores the social networks and community/family resources available to day laborers to support their needs. The findings discussed under the third research question are day laborers' reliance on social networks and community resources.

***Research question 1.*** What specific strategies do day laborers use to cope with the daily challenges and stressors in their lives?

*Reliance on friends.* Reliance on friends emerged as a significant coping mechanism in my study. Friends helped each other with their English and provided moral support to help with the anxiety caused by language barriers. Friends also helped each other find jobs and housing. Several of the participants lived in large groups that helped defray expenses.

This finding is consistent with Walter et al. (2002). In that study, participants survived by living together in large groups. Similarly, participants in Magaña and Hovey (2003) lived with friends and family. Additionally, 91% of the participants in that study had migrated to the U.S. with friends or family (Magaña & Hovey, 2003). Also that same study, participants, lacking reliable transportation, either relied on friends and family for rides, or when driving unreliable vehicles, traveled in tandem in case one of the vehicles broke down (Magaña & Hovey, 2003).

Day laborers often rely on friends due to their immigration status and inability to speak English. Because they have very few resources available to them, friends are depended upon to assist whenever possible. This study revealed that many participants were unaware of the resources that are available to them. If they are to survive, they need to create their own resources often achieved through the friendships they maintain within their own informal circle. This reliance speaks to the resourcefulness of this group but it is also a testament to the types of friendships they forge. Additionally, it highlights an important aspect of Latino culture: They tend to help one another, even when at the bottom of the food chain.

The principle reason why reliance on friends was a coping mechanism for my participants was due to the fact that day laborers were not validated as productive citizens in the United States. Yosso (2006) discusses how dominant American culture fails to validate people of color and their social successes and contributions. As a result, my participants relied on friends within their own culture for validation. In addition, my participants' quest for a semblance of social justice caused them to forge friendships of their own. Lomas (as cited in Yosso, 2006) discusses how social justice is a central

driving force that gives voice and empowerment to people of color. My participants' actions in reaching out and connecting with one another revealed a desire for social justice in an unjust and unequal society and it was the principle reason why they relied on each other as friends in my study.

*Keeping a positive attitude.* Keeping a positive attitude arose as another coping strategy for day laborers in this study. Participants reported how keeping a positive attitude was instrumental in avoiding the negative outlook that so many day laborers understandably developed in their day-to-day experiences on the streets. Keeping a positive attitude was therefore crucial to success as a day laborer especially given the serious adversity that they experienced such as separation from their families and lack of employment. Keeping a positive attitude resulted in enabling my participants to overcome potentially harmful situations such as substance abuse which would ultimately prove counterproductive in providing for families back home as well as keeping oneself healthy.

Magaña and Hovey (2003) also found that a portion of laborers in their study kept a positive attitude in light of challenging working conditions. In addition, general living conditions required that laborers keep a positive attitude in order to persevere. This study goes on to cite positive thinking as a means to cope with hard labor.

Oliver and Shapiro (as cited in Yosso, 2006) discussed cultural contributions regarding people of color in relation to keeping a positive attitude. Positive attitude in my study supports the premise of other researchers such as Delgado-Gaitan (as cited in Yosso, 2006), who indicated that a positive attitude is essential to keep operating in a climate that is adverse and challenging. For my participants, keeping a positive attitude

was needed in order to have sufficient emotional strength to navigate and overcome the adverse and challenging environment they worked in. Lack of employment for long periods of time, inability to speak English, and lack of money all took an emotional toll on my participants. Keeping a positive attitude not only allowed my participants the ability to stave off potential depression, but it also allowed them to continue on in the hope of eventually getting to a place of empowerment through consistent employment and generating an income for themselves and their families.

***Research question 2.*** In what ways has working as a day laborer affected participants' sense of self, emotional and physical health, and family relationships?

*Sense of self.* The participants in this study revealed a sense of self through their agency, that is, how capable they felt regarding their power, capacity, or ability to influence events in their environment. On one end of the spectrum, in some situations, participants were empowered by their ability to take active control. For example, Cesar took active control regarding his lack of money by actively looking for employment. On the other hand, participants could also become disempowered, and accept their situations passively without trying to change them. For instance, Brandon coped with his difficult situation by trying not to think about it too much. Half cited passive acceptance as a coping strategy and four used positive thinking as a strategy. Three of the participants used a combination of active control and passive acceptance. This mixed approach may be indicative of a day laborer's resiliency at the moment he faced the stressor and deployed the selected coping mechanism. Given their stressful environments, it is not surprising that often these men sometimes lack the energy or resourcefulness to creatively deal with a stressor in a positive way, and instead do nothing but passively accept their

situation. Magaña and Hovey (2003) reported similar findings. The migrant farm workers in their study used passive acceptance to deal with stressors such as physically demanding work, poor working conditions, and insufficient housing. In this same study, participants sometimes also used positive thinking to cope with their physically demanding work.

Like my study, Walter et al. (2002) also reported that working as day laborers sometimes had positive effects on migrant workers' sense of self. Day laborers were proud of their abilities to leave home and make the difficult border crossing, to cope with living in a foreign country, and to support their families from afar. In my study, similar findings, showing that working as day laborers and living in the U.S. can actually have positive effects on day laborers, came as a surprise given all the adversity these men face on a day-to-day basis. It speaks to their resiliency, resourcefulness, and ability to find the positive aspects of a difficult situation.

According to a key LatCrit principle, there is a dominant white culture and it fails to validate people of color and their social success and contributions (Yosso, 2006). Participants in my study, therefore, had to create a strong sense of self in ways that allowed for self-preservation. Because the dominant culture did not validate them, it was up to them alone to ensure they survived internally by buttressing their sense of self against the domination of the society at large.

*Emotional and physical health.* Day labor often involves dangerous work and four of the 12 participants in my study sustained injuries; three sustained serious injuries and two of those required multiple surgeries. This is in keeping with the findings of several studies (Valenzuela et al., 2006; Walter et al., 2002; Magaña & Hovey, 2003).

Valenzuela et al. (2006) found that, during a two-month period, 20% of day laborers had been injured on the job, and of those, more than 50% did not get any medical attention. In addition to sustaining injuries, over two thirds of the injured workers lost wages while recovering from their injuries.

All of the participants in the Walter et al. (2002) study had sustained injuries, and many of the injuries were serious. As my study also found, when seriously injured, day laborers could not send money home, leaving their dependent families in dire straits. Walter et al. (2002) also found that injury led to serious economic problems for day laborers and their families.

Moreover, Magaña and Hovey (2003) concluded that migrant workers have poor physical health. This poor health stems from an inability to afford health care and a lack of medical insurance. These researchers found that migrant workers were one of the unhealthiest groups of people living in the U.S.

Unlike the participants in Walter et al. (2002), only some of the participants in my study had sustained serious injuries. The Walter et al. (2002) study focused solely on injured day laborers. In addition, many of these men were recovering while homeless. In my study, participants had a better quality of life, due to steady housing and greater overall health. Additionally, Valenzuela et al. (2006) found that employer abuse of day laborers was rampant, and this abuse sometimes even included physical abuse.

Yosso (2006) recognized that inequity exists throughout the layers of our society. Social inequities for my participants meant inadequate job training, which directly resulted in overwork, fatigue, and emotional and physical harm. Likewise, injustice for my participants came in the form of lack of pay and lack of job oversight. In my study,



the workplace served as just one more system in which injustice was prevalent. For example, Carlos reflected on an initial meeting with an employer that started out aggressive because of the employers prejudice for Latin Americans. For these reasons, physical injury and emotional instability became a major problem for my participants.

*Family relationships.* The topic of family relationships generated an immense amount of qualitative data in this study. Both families back home and the day laborers living separately from them were greatly affected by their prolonged separations and the participants in this study talked at length about these effects. For the most part, prolonged separations had negative effects. Because children have difficulty understanding why their fathers have left, relationships between fathers and their children sometimes became tense. Although wives may agree with the decision for their husbands to immigrate to the U.S., problems still arose, such as suspicions of infidelities and alcoholism. Surprisingly, family separation could have positive effects. Armando spoke of how he and his family had grown stronger as a result of facing the adversity of living apart. Like many of the findings in this study, this speaks to the resiliency of day laborers and their ability to find positive aspects in such a negative environment.

My study found that these men had been apart from their families, on average, for six and a half years. This is in keeping with the Valenzuela et al. (2006) study which found that 40% of day laborers had been in the U.S. for more than six years. Such a prolonged period apart is bound to cause problems for many day laborers and their families. Walter et al. (2002) found that even faithful husbands faced accusations of sexual infidelities from their wives. Although my study did not examine the sexual activity of the participants, the literature does reveal that day laborers do face a higher

incidence of HIV than the general population (Organista & Kubo, 2005). Walter et al. (2002) also found that day laborers who became injured and ceased sending home remittances aroused suspicions back home. Wives became suspicious of alcohol abuse or infidelities. For day laborers themselves, their failure to live up to the role of the Latin male provider also created anxiety for participants (Walter et al., 2002). In my study, the role of provider was one of the top priorities for these men.

The participants in this study found themselves unable to see their families for long periods of time because of both their economic and immigration status. Immigration status relegated these men to a subordinate class and further strained familial relationships. The economic and legal restrictions that kept these men from their families were indicative of the domination of the greater society over this population. Other studies support this view (Montoya, 2002; Johnson, 2004). In accordance with LatCrit principles, woven into the dominant society are forms of racism that exist in layers of equitability (Yosso, 2006). In this context, family relationships were negatively affected due to existing immigration and legal policies applicable once these men arrived in the United States. All of my participants reported an overwhelming strain in the area of family relationships as a result of legal and immigrations policies, which kept them from visiting their families upon arrival to the United States.

***Research question 3.*** What social networks and community/family resources are available to day laborers to support their needs?

*Social networks.* Unlike many studies that indicated that employers were a major source of stress, my study found the opposite. None of 12 participants in my study identified employers as a major source of stress in their lives. In fact, participants such as

Dario discussed how employers were in a unique position to assist day laborers in that they often spoke both English and Spanish. Employers were also a source of encouragement in that they would motivate and empower day laborers when they were praised and their services were retained for doing a good job. This would often initiate a relationship that day laborers could tap into when looking for further employment or networking opportunities.

In addition, complete strangers in the community were a positive force in the lives of day laborers. Dario stated that he was surprised on multiple occasions when a complete stranger stepped forward to lend a helping hand. Whether helping to ward off an aggressive individual, or receiving translation assistance at a store, the contacts that were made during these experiences showed that individual members of the community offered the opportunity to network in an unorthodox but noteworthy fashion. Smith (2008) also found that the community mobilized to assist day laborers, although on a larger scale. In her study, she found that local communities and organizations initiated worker centers for day laborers in response to the plight of this vulnerable group.

On the other hand, Smith (2008) and Valenzuela et al. (2006) found that hostile employers were prevalent in their studies of day laborers. Those studies concluded that employers often posed a threat to laborers by the dangerous working conditions in which they employed day laborers. These dangerous working conditions often led to physical and emotional injury as found in Walter et al. (2002) who researched day laborers who had sustained injuries while on the job. In the literature, employers committed other abuses against day laborers through abandonment at work sites, wage theft, and even physical and verbal abuse (Valenzuela et al., 2006; Smith, 2008). Both Smith (2008) and

Walter et al. (2002) also determined that day laborers were the target of hostility and violence from some members of the community.

One of the reasons why my participants did not identify employers as a potential stressor could be due to the fact that my study involved a very small sample of participants. Valenzuela et al. (2002, 2006) conducted both state and national level research studies involving thousands of day laborers. It could be that their frequent negative experiences with employers offered a truer picture of what the majority of day laborers experience with regard to boss-employee relations.

*Community/family resources.* Because their families are away from them, day laborers' reliance on their families for support was not nearly as pronounced as their reliance on other day laborers living and working in their community. However, my participants did manage to rely on family back home. Although calling home once a week or writing a letter does not appear to provide day laborers with much moral support, in reality, these ties kept the participants motivated to continue their struggle to survive and provide for their families back home. Extended family was another resource cited by participants. Several of them were drawn to the Bay Area because they had relatives living here. Illegal immigrants coming to the U.S., who are unable to speak the language, and are separated from their families are more likely to make the difficult and dangerous trip if they know they have support in their new country. Extended family provides a modicum of support and regularity for these men who find themselves immersed in a completely foreign culture.

This study found that day laborers do use the few community resources available to them. These resources included medical providers, churches, and public parks.

However, many were uninformed about the existence of free medical clinics. This is in keeping with the findings of Walter et al. (2002). In that study, workers were unaware of the free medical resources available to them. They assumed that, despite their low incomes, they would have to pay for any sort of medical services they received.

Although my study found that religion was an important resource for day laborers, Dunn and O'Brien (2009) found that the immigrants in their study did not rely on religion to cope with their situations. Several of my participants attended church regularly and cited God as a major source of strength. This difference may stem from the fact that the immigrants in the Dunn and O'Brien (2009) study were ESL students in good psychological health. The participants in my study had not reached a level of success that would enable them to attend English classes. Moreover, they faced extreme adversity living and working as day laborers, and struggled to procure just the basic necessities of life.

The community resources day laborers used in this study, such as churches and parks, were a free form of support. They were not the traditional resources we might think of such as counseling and other costly programs. Day laborers' use of these free resources again highlights their resourcefulness and efficiency. This finding contradicts the stereotypical image of immigrants arriving in the U.S. simply to drain the country's resources.

The adverse conditions that my participants worked under left them with an urge for greater social justice. Social justice is the driving force that seeks to give voice and empowerment to people of color (Lomas, as cited in Yosso, 2006). Seen from this perspective, my participants pursued social justice in part, by utilizing resources that

would make their situations more tolerable. There not only seemed to be a drive toward justice on behalf of my participants, but the community appeared to have a similar call. This came in the form of public parks for everyone regardless of the color of their skin, the establishment of day labor center, as well as churches assisting people regardless of immigration status. This demonstrated the existence of elements within the community where day laborers worked that displayed a tendency toward greater social justice.

### **Recommendations for Policy Makers**

This section provides recommendations for policy makers in three categories based on the findings of this research study: municipal, county and federal. In addition, this section offers recommendations for future research in the following areas: sample size and timeframe, family separation, border crossing, perception studies, quantitative and qualitative studies.

**Municipal.** Municipalities have the opportunity to assist the vulnerable day labor population by building centers for them and providing services at these centers.

***Day labor centers.*** Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that municipalities continue to create day labor centers for day laborers in areas where the centers already exist and begin to create new ones in areas where they do not exist. However, centers should not simply serve as formal hiring sites, but provide additional services that meet the needs of the day laborer community: English classes, information on medical resources, and opportunities for social networking.

Because the difficulties that lack of English presented to the participants were so pervasive in this study, English classes more than almost anything else would reap huge benefits for these men. Ernesto, for example, indicated that he wanted to speak English

but could not afford the fees for classes. Other participants indicated a desire to take English classes, given the opportunity. Existing day labor centers, although created to match day laborers with perspective employers, could fill this void, and in so doing become not just a place for employers to pick up day laborers, but a place for day laborers to have their other needs met. Day laborers spend long periods of time waiting at hiring sites for employers to pick them up. They could use some of this time to learn English, thus changing the face of what a day labor center is. Using this approach, day labor centers could become a more comprehensive resource, not only teaching English, but providing a plethora of information vital to the needs of the day labor community.

English classes would be structured to meet the practical needs of day laborers. Free, drop-in classes would consist of practical, pragmatic English that teaches the basics: greetings, work and payment terms, language for making a doctor's appointment, and vocabulary for common personal needs such as food. Other English classes could include crash courses for new arrivals and slightly more advanced classes for day laborers with a better grasp of the language. Bilingual student interns, perhaps studying languages, multiculturalism, or social sciences, could teach English and additional skills to these men such as cultural norms in the U.S. or how to use a computer. Not only would the men benefit, the students would also. They would receive hands-on training and develop both an understanding of another culture and compassion, important lessons often not taught in the classroom.

In addition to English classes, day labor centers could provide medical information such as the names and contact information of doctors and free medical clinics, and injury prevention. Several of the participants in this study were unaware of

free medical resources available to them and they would have welcomed such information.

In addition to providing English classes and information on medical resources, day labor centers could also provide a venue for day laborers to gather and network for employment and income possibilities. The findings of this study revealed the large extent to which day laborers rely on each other to find work, secure housing, and provide moral support. Reliance on friends was a major coping strategy in this study and day laborers use social networks to build their own social safety net. Day labor centers could provide day laborers with additional opportunities to create and benefit from these networks. The centers could also set up a program to match new arrivals with other day laborers who have more experience in the United States.

Finally, day labor centers would provide the basic amenities for day laborers: water, bathrooms, phones, or simply a safe and welcoming place to rest. Because this study found that family separation was such a huge issue for day laborers, to help these men maintain their relationships with their families back home, centers could also provide access to computers so these men can call home using an inexpensive computer application such as Skype. Several of the participants called home regularly and centers equipped with the tools that enable these men to do so inexpensively would be a huge asset to this population.

Non-profit organizations should continue their partnership with municipalities in sustaining day labor centers. Non-profit organizations that support populations in need, such as Catholic Charities, food banks, social service agencies, and even medical services provide vital resources for day laborers.



**County.** At the county level, some of the services that would help day laborers are mental health and hospital outreach programs, housing agencies, and employment agencies that provide job training.

***Mental health and hospital outreach.*** This study found that day laborers living away from their loved ones for an extended period of time experienced anxiety, depression, and loneliness due to family separation. Therefore it is recommended that county hospitals provide mental health programs that target this population's needs.

In addition, day laborers reported a lack of medical resources in this study. Given that four of the 12 participants in my study, Carlos, Dario, Eliberto, and Armando, had been injured on the job, and many of the participants worked at jobs for which they were not trained, the probability of injury is quite high for the day labor population. However, many of the participants in my study were also unaware of medical resources available to them. Hence, hospitals should not only provide services to day laborers but also educate this population through outreach programs on the availability of such services.

Finally, medical services for day laborers should be tailored to their needs. Because lack of English was one factor that caused problems for participants in my study who had sought medical care, clinics should be staffed by Spanish-speaking health care providers who have been educated about this population's particular needs. Family separation, for example, can cause anxiety and even depression. In addition, because participants in this study indicated they did not want to take time away from work to visit a clinic, the hours for medical clinics should be later in the day and on weekends, when day laborers are more likely to be available and not looking for work or on the job.

***Housing agencies.*** This research study revealed that participants often lived with other day laborers in crowded conditions in order to survive. Felix, for example, had 15 roommates. Besides living together to survive, day laborers also find housing through other day laborers or extended family who were already here in the United States. County housing agencies could help match day laborers in need of housing with others who are in similar situations. This would not only help those searching for housing, but may also alleviate cramped housing conditions.

***Employment agencies.*** Because lack of employment was a stressor in my study, I recommend that county employment agencies facilitate in training day laborers for on-the-job skills through apprentice programs. Many of this study's participants worked in agriculture in their home country and yet here worked in construction, an activity for which they were not trained. Valenzuela et al. (2006) found day laborers with skills such as plumbing earned a higher average wage. Training day laborers for skilled trades would help them transition to the formal job market.

**Federal.** The federal government could improve the lives of the day laborer population by adjusting immigration policies. These men are here, they will continue to arrive, and the U.S. needs their labor.

***Immigration.*** Eight of the 12 participants discussed a horrifying border crossing. Their goal was not to drain the U.S. government of resources but to work hard and provide financial support for their families. They risked their lives to do so. Several participants in this study discussed the difficult economic situations back home. Armando, for example, said he came to the U.S. because he and his family back home are very poor. He and day laborers like him come to this country out of necessity, not out of

a desire to live in the U.S. and be separated from their loved ones. As a result of these types of findings, in order to contextualize the lives of these men, immigration officials at the federal level should receive sensitivity training. These men are not criminals.

It is also recommended that immigration policy on the federal level take into consideration the temporary nature of day laborers' stays in the United States. Although undocumented, most of my participants had no intention of seeking permanent residency in the United States. In addition, nine of my 12 participants had left behind wives and children in their home countries and the vast majority hoped to earn enough money to return home one day. In light of these findings, it is recommended that immigration policy reflect the conditions under which day laborers are in the country and grant temporary work visas for this population. As a result, day laborers would not have to live in fear of deportation and would be able to live a productive life free of harassment from immigration authorities. They could also visit their families occasionally back home, thus helping to alleviate their suffering from being separated from their families.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

**Negative coping strategies.** Although only positive coping strategies were revealed in this study, future studies could explore negative coping strategies such as drug abuse, alcoholism, violence, prostitution, and other negative behaviors that day laborers might exhibit in dealing with their environment.

**Sample size and time frame.** This small study consisted of only 12 participants in San Mateo, most of whom came from Guatemala. There were benefits to having a small study, such as the ability to conduct in-depth, one-on-one interviews that provided a large amount of qualitative data that a larger study with hundreds of participants could

not provide. The sample size, however, could be increased to 25 or 30 and still be manageable in terms of gathering qualitative data.

The time period of study could also differ. The research for this study was conducted over a period of a few months and during an economic recession. Conducting a study over a longer period of time covering both a recession and a period of economic prosperity, and investigating how different economic conditions affect day laborers may offer further insight into the day labor market. For example, do employers hire day laborers more frequently during a recession or do they hire them less frequently? Such an investigation could provide data to help determine whether migrants actually take jobs away from Americans or not.

**Family separation.** Additional studies on the effects of long-term family separation are crucial to understanding the day laborer experience. Family separation emerged as a huge, multi-faceted issue and the topic generated a large amount of data. This topic alone could be the focus of an entire study. Family was very important to these men and separation from their loved ones caused a great deal of emotional turmoil and anxiety. What happens after years of separation? How can this issue be alleviated? Future studies would go far in exploring this issue in depth in order to understand the total experience of what it means to be a day laborer.

Similarly, another rich area for future research are the coping strategies of families left at home. This study revealed a great deal of family tension. Some wives became suspicious of their long-distance husbands and some children felt abandoned or became angry with their fathers for leaving. Although the participants hoped to work here in the U.S. in order to send money back home in the form of remittances, when they

were out of work, due to injuries or a lack of employment, they could not send money home. When they did send money home, often the amount was very small. A future study could examine several questions. How do their families survive? Are the families worse off with the head of the household gone for years on end? Do members of the family find work themselves? Is money over family a wise choice?

Another related study could examine the return of these men to their home countries. My research revealed rifts between fathers and their children who did not understand their parents' motives for leaving them behind. Neighbors could also be judgmental. When these men return, how do they assimilate back into their communities? What are the difficulties? All the participants were anxious to return home after years of separation. Future long-term studies could also "close the loop" in terms of understanding the day laborer experience from beginning (departure) to end (return). These future longitudinal studies would examine an original group of participants throughout the entire day laborer experience, and track them over a period of time.

**Border crossing.** Although border crossing was not a focus of this research, this study revealed multiple issues surrounding border crossings. Throughout the research, the stress of migrating to this country repeatedly arose as a common theme. However, because this study specifically focused on coping strategies of day laborers in San Mateo, California, after they arrived in the United States, the topic of border crossings was not explored deeply. Because the border crossing is a key component in understanding the day laborer experience, future studies that explore this issue in depth would help contextualize the lives of these men.

**Perception studies.** Another study could examine the images of life in the U.S. that attract day laborers here. Why do they think life will be better in America? Do they hear folklore from friends, relatives, and neighbors about immigrants coming to the U.S. and striking it rich? Are they motivated by media portrayals of the U.S. as the land of opportunity? The participants soon realized that working and living here as a day laborer makes for a difficult life. They don't have enough work or enough money, and they are away from their loved ones. This research indicated that day laborers' perceptions of this country did not necessarily match the actual economic and social conditions on arrival.

**Quantitative studies.** Future studies should include a large, quantitative-based study of day laborers in all of California. This larger study would provide more accurate results than a small study such as mine can. The research areas to include are statistics on the number of hours day laborers wait at the hiring site, number of hours worked, types of jobs done, wages, and number of incidents of employer abuse.

**Qualitative studies.** It is recommended that future research include a qualitative format with a larger, more diverse sample size. My research study was limited in size with only 12 participants, the majority of whom came from Guatemala. The results of my study generated some very rich data, especially in the area of narratives from the participants. A study on a larger scale with a more diverse sample would render different results and an even clearer picture of the lives of day laborers. Rather than doing a national study with thousands of participants, a modest number of 100 could feasibly be recruited in different areas of the country. Because the Bay Area is quite politically liberal, and possibly more welcoming of day laborers, perhaps the research would differ in more politically conservative areas of California or other states where day laborers are

less welcome, and hence render a different experience altogether of what it means to be a day laborer.

An in-depth case study of one day laborer, with observations at the hiring site, in the job, in the home, recreation spots, and so forth, would provide a wealth of information. This research opportunity would involve full shadowing of a participant. Unlike the previous recommendation for a large qualitative study, this would be an intensive qualitative study. Many of the participants in my study did not initially report various sources of anxiety such as lack of work or low income as stressors. However, when they started to discuss these stressors and reveal their individual stories, it became obvious that these were areas of immense stress. By observing a participant first hand, a researcher would be able to look more objectively at the struggles day laborers encounter, when they encounter them, rather than relying on the day laborer's perception of stress and memory.

In my study, the participants had regular interaction with their employers. As a result, I recommend that a separate study be conducted which includes interviews with employers. Because my participants reported positive interactions with employers, it is recommended that future research explore this relationship more closely. Although much of the literature reveals negative interactions with employers and employer abuse (Valenzuela et al., 2006; Smith, 2008; Walter et al., 2002), my research revealed positive interactions with employers and the inclusion of employers in day laborers' social network. Research involving employers may reveal further data lacking in the existing literature, as the studies cited above did not include employers as participants. Employers may hold a different perspective of the day labor experience. They are the

other half of the labor equation. Employer insights may give a more complete and objective picture of the day labor experience.

### **Reflections of the Researcher**

My research with day laborers has been a challenging, introspective and rewarding experience. Examining the lives of these men has made me keenly aware and sensitive to the plight of all populations that encounter adversity in their day-to-day lives and has even shed new insights into my own life. This project has been especially important to me because I am the only son of Spanish-speaking migrant parents that continue to work in the fields to this day. Though we typically lived in rural, agricultural areas where we could find work, the struggles were continuous. Many of the same issues that the day laborers in this study faced on a daily basis are the same struggles my family and I lived through. Economic difficulties, separation from family, hours of hard labor for little pay, and alienation from social networks because of lack of language and education are common threads that bind me to the participants in this study. In delving into the private experiences of the men in this study I was reminded of who I am and the courageousness and tenacity needed to survive each day. In fact, I carry that tenacity with me to this very day. Even though I no longer work in the fields as my parents do, the compassion with which I listened and the true understanding of what these men shared touched my soul and gave me a new vantage point in re-examining my own life. I believe that understanding is the key. It is this type of understanding which is essential in serving populations that struggle on a day-to-day basis.



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**APPENDIX A**

**Participant Consent Form**

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Sr. Juan Doe

123 Doe St.

San Mateo, Ca 94403

My name is Antonio Gallardo and I am a graduate student in the education department at the University of San Francisco. I am initiating a study of day laborers. I am interested in knowing how day laborers engage their environment.

Because you are day laborers, you are being asked to participate in this study because you have valuable information to contribute to this study. If you agree to be part of this study, you will be part of two recorded interviews during the spring semester 2010 and you will be observed two times at your place of work in San Mateo, California.

It is possible that some questions will make you feel uncomfortable. You are free to decline an answer at any time. Although your name will not be used, I will know that I have asked permission for you to participate because I have sent you a copy of this letter and a questionnaire. Participation in this study may result in a loss of confidentiality. Confidential archives shall be maintained with a maximum of security. Actual identities of participants shall not be used in reports or publications resulting from this study. Results from this study shall be secured with a special code at all times. Only those initiating this study shall have access to the archives. The individual results of this study shall not be shared with your fellow day laborers.

Although there are no direct benefits for participation in this study, the anticipated benefit shall be a deeper understanding about the way in which day laborers engage their environment in San Mateo, California.

There shall be no cost to you resulting from participation in this study, nor shall there be compensation to you for participation in this study.

If there are any questions about this study you may contact me at (650) 679-4475. If there are additional questions about this study, you may contact the IRBPHS, Psychology Department at the University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton St., San Francisco, Ca 94117-1080.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY IS VOLUNTARY.** You are free to decline to be a part of this study, or be dismissed from this study at any time.

Antonio Gallardo/Graduate Student

Participant

## FORMA DE PARTICIPACION PARA PARTICIPANTES

UNIVERSIDAD DE SAN FRANCISCO

Sr. Juan Doe

123 Doe St.

San Mateo, Ca 94403

Mi nombre es Antonio Gallardo y soy alumno de post-grado del Departamento de Educación de la Universidad de San Francisco. Me encuentro iniciando un estudio en jornaleros, y como ellos se relacionan con su entorno.

Este estudio requiere recopilar información directamente de jornaleros. Es por lo anterior que se le está pidiendo que participe de este estudio. La información que usted puede proporcionar será muy valiosa para este estudio. Este estudio consta de dos entrevistas grabadas con un audio grabadora en el semestre del otoño del 2010 y será observado dos veces en su puesto de trabajo en San Mateo California.

Es posible que usted se pueda sentir incomodo con algunas preguntas. Sin embargo usted es libre de negar una respuesta en cualquier momento. Aunque su nombre no será usado públicamente, este estudio igualmente implica una pérdida de confidencialidad, porque yo sabré que se le pidió permiso para participar, y porque yo le he enviado esta carta con un formulario. Sin embargo, los archivos confidenciales se mantendrán bajo máxima seguridad.

Las identidades de ningún participante se usaran en reportes o publicaciones de los resultados de este estudio. Los resultados de este estudio tendrán una clave especial y asegurada todo el tiempo; solamente el personal que ha iniciado este estudio tendrá acceso a los archivos. Los resultados de cada individuo participante de este estudio no serán compartidos con los otros jornaleros participantes del estudio.

Si bien, este estudio no incluye beneficios directos para usted por su participación. Existe un beneficio anticipado por este estudio, el cual será una comprensión más profunda sobre la manera en que los jornaleros se enfrentan a su entorno en San Mateo, California.

Su participación en este estudio no incluye ningún costo para usted; como tampoco incluye ninguna compensación por haber participado en este estudio.

Si tienen preguntas sobre este estudio se puede comunicar conmigo al número, (650) 679-4475. Si hay preguntas adicionales sobre este estudio se puede comunicar con el IRBPHS, Departamento de Psicología, de la Universidad de San Francisco, que se encarga de la protección de voluntarios en estudios de este tipo.

**PARTICIPACION EN ESTE ESTUDIO ES VOLUNTARIA.** Usted tiene la libertad de negarse a ser parte de este estudio, o para retirarse de este estudio a cualquier momento.

Antonio Gallardo/Alumno Post-Grado

Participante

**APPENDIX B**

**Background Interview Questions**



[All interviews were conducted in Spanish]

### BASIC PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. May we call you for follow up?
2. If so, what is your phone number?
3. How old are you?
4. What is your zip code?
5. What is your marital status?
6. How many children do you have?
7. Do you live with your immediate family? (wife, children)
8. Do you live with extended family? (uncle, cousin, grandmother)
9. How many people live in your household?
10. What is your nationality?
11. How long have you lived in the U.S.?
12. Are you a U.S. citizen?
13. Are you a legal resident?

### EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

1. How many years of education have you had?
2. Do you plan to go to school in the future?
3. Do you speak fluent English?
4. If you do not speak English, are you trying to learn?
5. Do you speak fluent Spanish?
6. Do you speak English at work?
7. Do you speak Spanish at work?
8. Are you attending school?
9. What is your employment status? (i.e., employed, unemployed, under employed)
10. What was your occupation in your native country?
11. What day labor jobs do you do in the U.S.? (i.e., painter, construction worker, mover, migrant farmer, janitor/custodian, waiter/restaurant job)
12. How many hours do you work weekly?
13. How many hours do you want to work weekly?
14. Do you make more than \$35,000 a year? (Poverty threshold level in Bay Area)
15. Do you own a car for work?
16. Do you ride public transportation?
17. Have you ever been stopped by the police for any reason?

### HEALTH

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank your health? (1= very bad, 5 = average, 10 = excellent)
2. Do you have a private doctor?
3. Have you visited a county health clinic?
4. Are you aware of any health services available to you?

5. Do you have health insurance?
6. Do you receive Medicaid?
7. Do you know someone who receives Medicaid?
8. How many times in the past year have you or your family visited
9. A doctor?
10. A counselor?
11. A dentist?
12. An eye doctor?
13. A specialist?
14. Other?

#### ACCULTURATION

1. Do you watch Hispanic TV shows?
2. Do you watch American TV shows?
3. Do you listen to Latino radio?
4. Do you listen to American radio?
5. If you are not a U.S. citizen, do you plan on becoming one?
6. Do you have a bank account?
7. Do you have a safety deposit box?
8. Do you have a credit card?

#### INFORMACION PERSONAL BASICA

1. ¿Podemos llamarte para otra entrevista?
2. ¿Si podemos, cuál es tu número de teléfono?
3. ¿Qué edad tienes?
4. ¿Cuál es tu código postal?
5. ¿Eres casado?
6. ¿Cuántos hijos tienes?
7. ¿Vives con tu esposa e hijos?
8. ¿Vives con familia adicional? (Tío, primo, abuelita)
9. ¿Cuánta gente vive en tu casa?
10. ¿Cuál es tu nacionalidad?
11. ¿Cuanto tiempo tienes en los Estados Unidos?
12. ¿Eres ciudadano?
13. ¿Eres un residente legal?

#### EDUCACION Y EMPLEO

1. ¿Cuántos años de educación tienes?
2. ¿Piensas asistir a la escuela en el futuro?
3. ¿Hablas inglés bien?
4. ¿Si no hablas inglés, estas tratando de aprender?
5. ¿Hablas español bien?
6. ¿Hablas inglés en el trabajo?

7. ¿Hablas español en el trabajo?
8. ¿Estás en la escuela ahora?
9. ¿Estás empleado?
10. ¿Cuál era tu ocupación en tu país de origen?
11. ¿Que trabajos haces como jornalero en los Estado Unidos?
12. ¿Cuántas horas trabajas por semana?
13. ¿Cuántas horas te gustaría trabajar por semana?
14. ¿Ganas más de \$35,000 al año?
15. ¿Tienes auto para ir a tu trabajo?
16. ¿Utilizas transporte público?
17. ¿Te ha parado la policía por cualquier razón?

## SALUD

1. En una escala de 1 a 10, como está tu salud? (1= muy mal, 5 = más o menos, 10 = excelente)
2. ¿Tienes un doctor privado?
3. ¿Has visitado una clínica de salud?
4. ¿Sabes de servicios de salud que se te ofrecen?
5. ¿Tienes aseguranza médica?
6. ¿Recibes MediCal?
7. ¿Conoces alguien que recibe MediCal?
8. ¿Cuántas veces en el año pasado has visitado
9. ¿Un doctor?
10. ¿Un consejero?
11. ¿Un dentista?
12. ¿Un oculista?
13. ¿Un especialista?
14. ¿Otro?

## ASIMILACION DE LA CULTURA

1. ¿Miras televisión Latina?
2. ¿Miras televisión Americana?
3. ¿Escuchas radio Latina?
4. ¿Escuchas radio Americana?
5. ¿Piensas hacerte ciudadano, si no lo eres todavía?
6. ¿Tienes cuenta de banco?
7. ¿Tienes una caja segura de depósito?
8. ¿Tienes tarjeta de crédito?

**APPENDIX C**

**In-Depth Interview Questions**

[All interviews were conducted in Spanish]

1. What circumstances brought you to the United States?
2. What was your journey like?
3. Why did you choose to come to the Bay Area in particular? Do you have family or friends here?
4. How did you find housing? What was your housing like?
5. What was your first job?
6. What jobs have you done as a day laborer?
7. Have you ever been injured on the job? If so, describe.
8. Are you the only one working in your household (i.e., the sole provider)? Do you feel you are fulfilling your role of provider?
9. If participant lives apart from family:
  - a. How has living in the U.S. affected your relationship with your family back home? Your wife? Your children?
  - b. Do you send remittances home? What portion of your pay do you send?

1. ¿Qué circunstancias lo trajó a Estados Unidos?
2. ¿Cómo fue su viaje?
3. ¿Por qué decidió venir al Area de la Bahía? ¿Tiene familia o amigos aquí?
4. ¿Cómo encontró casa? ¿Cómo era su casa?
5. ¿Cómo fue su primer trabajo?
6. ¿Qué tipo de trabajos ha desempeñado como jornal?
7. ¿Alguna vez ha tenido un accidente de trabajo? Describalo?
8. ¿Es usted el único que trabaja en su casa? Es usted el único proveedor? Usted siente que cumple con su rol de proveedor?
9. Si el participante vive lejos de su familia:
  - a. ¿Cómo ha afectado la relación con su familia al estar viviendo en Estados Unidos? ¿Con su esposa? ¿Con sus hijos?
  - b. ¿Usted envía dinero a su hogar? ¿Que porción de su salario envía?

**APPENDIX D**

**Stressor Questionnaire**

[All stressor questionnaires were conducted in Spanish]

PART I: On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all stressful and 5 being extremely stressful, rate the stressors listed below that can affect day laborers.

1. Separation from family and friends 1 2 3 4 5
2. Unpredictable work 1 2 3 4 5
3. Low income 1 2 3 4 5
4. Lack of English language proficiency 1 2 3 4 5
5. Physically difficult/dangerous work 1 2 3 4 5
6. Difficult bosses 1 2 3 4 5
7. Poor housing conditions 1 2 3 4 5
8. Difficulty adjusting to American culture 1 2 3 4 5
9. Fear of deportation 1 2 3 4 5
10. Harassment from police/merchants/residents 1 2 3 4 5
11. Lack of transportation 1 2 3 4 5
12. Lack of medical care 1 2 3 4 5
13. Educational stressors for self or for children 1 2 3 4 5
14. Other 1 2 3 4 5

PART II: How do you cope with stress?

1. Telephone or write home
2. Exercise
3. Attend church/religious services
4. Go to park
5. Go to shopping mall
6. Go to beach
7. Go to library
8. Attend or host parties/barbeques
9. Participate in children's school activities
10. Participate in charity/neighborhood improvement
11. Participate in/watch sports
12. Accept difficult situation/try not to think about it
13. Other

PARTE I: En una escala de 1 a 5. Donde 1 es no estresante y 5 es muy estresante, califica los estresores abajo en cuanto a cómo afectan a los jornaleros

1. Separación de familia y amigos
2. Inestabilidad laboral
3. Bajos ingresos
4. Falta de competencias en el uso del inglés
5. Dificultades físicas/trabajos peligrosos
6. Jefes complicados
7. Malas condiciones de vivienda

8. Dificultades para ajustarse a la cultura Americana
9. Temor de ser deportado
10. Persecución de la policía/comerciantes/residentes
11. Falta de transporte
12. Falta de servicios médicos
13. Falta de educación para ti o tus hijos
14. Otro

PARTE II: ¿Cómo superas el estrés?

1. Teléfono o escribiendo a casa
2. Ejercitando
3. Asistir a la iglesia/Servicios religiosos
4. Ir al parque
5. Ir de compras
6. Ir a la playa
7. Ir a la biblioteca
8. Asistir u organizar fiestas/asados
9. Participar en actividades de la escuela de tus hijos
10. Participar en actividades de caridad/mejorando tu vecindario
11. Participar o viendo deportes
12. Aceptar la dificultad de la situación/tratar de no pensar en ello.
13. Otro



**APPENDIX E**

**Follow-Up Questions to the Stressor Questionnaire**

[All follow-up questions were conducted in Spanish]

1. On the stressor questionnaire, you indicated that \_\_\_\_\_ causes you a great deal of stress.
  - a. How does this stressor make you feel? (Angry, depressed, anxious, etc.)
  - b. Can you do anything to cope with this stressor?
  - c. If so, how do you cope with this stressor?
2. On the stressor questionnaire, you indicated that \_\_\_\_\_ causes you a great deal of stress.
  - a. How does this stressor make you feel? (Angry, depressed, anxious, etc.)
  - b. Can you do anything to cope with this stressor?
  - c. If so, how do you cope with this stressor?
3. On the stressor questionnaire, you indicated that \_\_\_\_\_ causes you a great deal of stress.
  - a. How does this stressor make you feel? (Angry, depressed, anxious, etc.)
  - b. Can you do anything to cope with this stressor?
  - c. If so, how do you cope with this stressor?
4. Do you have social networks you can turn to for help?
5. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about your background or experiences as an immigrant and a day laborer?

1. En el cuestionario de estrés indicaste que \_\_\_\_\_ te causa una gran cantidad de estrés
  - a. ¿Cómo te hace sentir este estresor? (enojado, deprimido, ansioso, etc.)
  - b. ¿Puedes hacer algo para superar este estresor?
  - c. ¿Si puedes, cómo lo superas?
2. En el cuestionario de estrés indicaste que \_\_\_\_\_ te causa una gran cantidad de estrés
  - a. ¿Cómo te hace sentir este estresor? (enojado, deprimido, ansioso, etc.)
  - b. ¿Puedes hacer algo para superar este estresor?
  - c. ¿Si puedes, cómo lo superas?
3. En el cuestionario de estrés indicaste que \_\_\_\_\_ te causa una gran cantidad de estrés
  - a. ¿Cómo te hace sentir este estresor? (enojado, deprimido, ansioso, etc.)
  - b. ¿Puedes hacer algo para superar este estresor?
  - c. ¿Si puedes, cómo lo superas?
4. ¿Tienes una red social que te puede apoyar?
5. ¿Hay algo más que te gustaría decirme de tus experiencias como inmigrante jornal?

**APPENDIX F**

**Group Interview Questions**

[The group interview was conducted in Spanish]

1. Let's talk about the specific things that stress you as a day laborer. (Prompts: employer, wages, work environment, uncertainty, difficulty.)
  2. How well do you feel you have assimilated into American culture?
  3. Are you aware of any government social programs available to you?
  4. Do you feel that they are available to you as a non-documented worker?
  5. How does this availability or lack thereof make you feel?
  6. What coping strategies do you use to deal with your problems?
- 
1. Hablemos acerca de cosas específicas que te causan estrés como jornal.
  2. ¿Cómo sientes que has asimilado la cultura Americana?
  3. ¿Tienes algún conocimiento de programas sociales gubernamentales disponibles para ti?
  4. ¿Sientes que ellos están disponibles para ti?
  5. ¿Cómo te hace sentir la disponibilidad o falta de disponibilidad de estos programas?
  6. ¿Qué estrategias utilizas para enfrentar tus problemas?

**APPENDIX G**  
**Statements of Validation**  
**From Expert Panel**

Antonio Gallardo

Title of dissertation: Coping Behaviors of Day Laborers in San Mateo, California

University of San Francisco

Purpose of stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire: Stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire are the instruments by which data regarding stress is collected within the dissertation.

Purpose of expert panel: To validate the instruments used within the dissertation.

The following is to certify that, Janice Dos Ramos, has validated the attached stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Janice Dos Ramos

Antonio Gallardo

Title of dissertation: Coping Behaviors of Day Laborers in San Mateo, California

University of San Francisco

Purpose of stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire: Stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire are the instruments by which data regarding stress is collected within the dissertation.

Purpose of expert panel: To validate the instruments used within the dissertation.

The following is to certify that, Susan Roberta Katz, has validated the attached stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Susan Roberta Katz

Antonio Gallardo

Title of dissertation: Coping Behaviors of Day Laborers in San Mateo, California

University of San Francisco

Purpose of stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire: Stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire are the instruments by which data regarding stress is collected within the dissertation.

Purpose of expert panel: To validate the instruments used within the dissertation.

The following is to certify that, Nicole Valentine, has validated the attached stressor questionnaire/follow up questions to the stressor questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Nicole Valentine



**APPENDIX H**  
**IRB Approval Form**

April 10, 2010

Dear Mr. Gallardo:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #10-034). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

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IRBPHS – University of San Francisco  
Counseling Psychology Department  
Education Building – Room 017  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080  
(415) 422-6091 (Message)  
(415) 422-5528 (Fax)  
irbphs@usfca.edu

**APPENDIX I**

**Expert Panel Background Data**

Janice Dos Ramos

Janice is a lifelong tenured primary school teacher working at a Hayward elementary school in a multicultural environment among high numbers of Latino students and their families. She is a veteran teacher with over twenty years of experience in primary education. Janice completed her B.A in Early Childhood Development from Humboldt State University. She has also earned an M.A in TESL from the University of San Francisco.

Susan Roberta Katz, Ph.D.

Susan is a university professor teaching in the International and Multicultural Education department at the University of San Francisco. Her research areas include human rights education; bilingual and intercultural education of marginalized populations in the U.S. and worldwide; link between critical pedagogy and academic literacy; examination of youth violence and its link to schooling; action research methodologies. She was recently awarded a Fulbright scholarship and continues to conduct research and advocate for Indigenous populations in Ecuador.

Nicole Valentine

Nicole is in the process of becoming a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) at the San Francisco Golden Gate Regional Center. She is a career social worker and has been working in the field of social services for over five years. She is state certified for working with domestic violence victims and currently facilitates an anger management group for individuals with disabilities. Nicole has an MSW from San Jose State University and B.A in Psychology from Humboldt State University where she also earned a minor in Ethnic Studies.