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The Impact of the 100-mile Border Enforcement Zone on Mexican Americans in Arizona

Nilda Flores-Gonzalez[1], Emir Estrada[1], Michelle Tellez[2], Daniela Carreon[1], and Brittany Romanello[1]

Abstract

Based on qualitative interview data with Mexican American and White participants, this article examines the impact of immigration-related policies on the U.S.-born adult children of Mexican immigrants. Building on Dunn's concept of a *low-intensity conflict zone*, we argue that the militarization of the border carries consequences for Mexican American border residents. Becoming *collateral subjects* to a system of racialized legal violence, they experience the suspension of constitutional rights through racially motivated arbitrary stops, interrogations, and searches. The frequency and intensity of these experiences lead to anxiety, frustration, and powerlessness, and chips away at their emotional well-being.

Keywords

border, legal violence, immigration, second generation, Arizona

Introduction

Mónica is a 21-year-old U.S.-born child of Mexican immigrants who was raised in Yuma, Arizona. Growing up in a border town, Mónica experiences immigration enforcement as part of daily life. She explains:

[1]Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA
[2]University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA

Corresponding Author:
Nilda Flores-Gonzalez, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-1004, USA.
Email: nfloresg@asu.edu

> I've lived in Yuma my whole life, and we have border crossing points. I thought that was normal growing up. . .When I got older, people were like, "No, you don't have to go through a crossing at every state." I was like, "Oh, that's very interesting.". . . My boyfriend, who is white, when we go through [checkpoints], I'm like,. . . "They don't ask you to take off your sunglasses?" And he's like, "No, I don't even usually talk to them when I go through the checkpoints." I'm like, "What?!" Every time, when I go through [Border Patrol agents ask]. . . "Oh, can you take off your sunglasses?" I usually, by habit, just take them off when I go through. And I usually get stopped.

The presence of immigration enforcement is so much a part of her life that Mónica had normalized her experiences, not realizing that people who live outside of the border zone do not regularly interact with the Border Patrol, have to go through Border Patrol checkpoints, or that these interactions are marked by racial profiling.

Mónica is just one of the nearly 3 million residents of Arizona's "100-mile border zone" who endure routine civil and human rights violations in the name of national security. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents can set up checkpoints, inspect passengers in private and public vehicles, enter private property (for those living within the 25-miles zone), and stop, interrogate, and detain individuals they suspect of committing immigration violations (Anthony, 2019; Maddux, 2017). For Arizona's 100-mile border zone residents, everyday activities often involve passing through Border Patrol checkpoints, which can end in humiliation and fear from unjustified searches (Núñez, 2020; Sabo et al., 2014). Cho (2022) found that Latinxs, particularly those living within 9 miles of Border Patrol checkpoints, seek alternative routes and drive shorter distances from home to avoid checkpoints. Non-whites are disproportionately affected as immigration enforcement is linked to the racialized nature of policing (Sterling & Joffe-Block, 2021). Building from Dunn (2021), we argue that these practices are part of the U.S.' systemic racialized law enforcement and legal violence that infringe on Blacks' and Latinxs' civil liberties (Menjívar & Ábrego, 2012; Padula, 2018; Sabo et al., 2014). Here, we examine (1) How does immigration enforcement manifests in the everyday lives of Mexican American young adults in Arizona? (2) What strategies do they employ to minimize the harm inflicted by immigration related legal violence? (3) How can CBP lessen the damage that their policies have on the well-being of people?

Collateral Racialized Subjects in Low-Intensity Conflict Zone (LIC)

The "100-mile border zone" was created in 1946 to empower the Border Patrol to conduct random and arbitrary stops and searches at checkpoints and on public and private property. The Defense Authorization Act of 1982 marked the beginning of the militarization of the U.S.–Mexico border through the use of military equipment, personnel, and tactics (Dunn, 2021). Dunn (2021) argues that the increasing militarization of the U.S.–Mexico border turned it into a Low-Intensity Conflict Zone (LIC), a term used for limited military intervention in non-war situations and against non-state

actors. Through the 1990s, border enforcement focused on Prevention Through Deterrence (PTD) leading to the expansion of the border wall, implementation of 24-hour electronic surveillance, and establishment of expedited removal processes (De León, 2015; Nevins, 2002). PTD also funnels migrants into the Sonoran Desert while sabotaging humanitarian aid efforts and discriminating against migrants during emergency responses, leading to the doubling of migrants' deaths since 1995 (Carroll, 2016; Cornelius, 2001; Rubio-Goldsmith et al., 2016). By 2022, CBP's budget skyrocketed, and 22,014 officers were deployed to the southwest border (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2023).

The securitization of the border has created a *state-as-lived experience* among border residents (Correa, 2013). Since 60% of people arrested and detained at checkpoints are non-deportable, immigration enforcement serves primarily to police all people living or passing through the 100-mile border zone (Felbab-Brown, 2017; Misra, 2018). Menjívar and Ábrego (2012) used the term *legal violence* to describe the less visible but harmful physical and emotional effects of immigration laws and policies on immigrant communities. These insidious and continuing practices "are embedded in legal practices, sanctioned, and actively implemented through formal procedures, and legitimated–and consequently seen as "normal" and natural because it is the law" (p. 1387). A new strand of research focuses on U.S. citizens as *collateral subjects* of legal violence resulting from immigration enforcement (e.g., Enriquez, 2020; Núñez, 2020; Rodriguez, 2023).

Those most affected by immigration enforcement are the people who live and build families and communities along the 2,000-mile-long U.S.–Mexico border (Téllez, 2015). Legal violence is so insidious that it renders members of immigrant families vulnerable in places where they should feel at ease, such as their homes (Del Real, 2018; Rodriguez 2023). Goldsmith et al. (2009) found that in South Tucson, police and Border Patrol are overly present and impinge on the lives of the mostly Mexican-origin community and being a native-born or naturalized U.S. citizen offers no protection against mistreatment by state authorities. Szkupinski-Quiroga et al. (2014) also found that legal violence makes Latinxs feel vulnerable in their local communities. They argue that over time, these policies have-long implications for the well-being of both foreign and native-born Latinxs. In other words, the growing border militarization for the past 40 years has increased the impact of legal violence on the everyday lives of Latinxs, and while citizenship may protect them from deportation, it does little to prevent mistreatment by CBP (Molina, 2014; Núñez, 2020; Padula, 2018; Sabo et al., 2014).

Molina (2014) argued that while the legal language of the law is race-neutral, immigration policies rely on racial scripts or dominant racial narratives that mark particular groups as "illegal." As a result, non-white groups regardless of legal status, and particularly Latinxs and Asians, are racialized as alien citizens, permanent immigrants (Chavez, 2013; Molina, 2014; Ngai, 2004; Jiménez, 2009). Molina adds that these racial scripts on "illegality" are etched into, and shape, how institutions and individuals think of, and act toward, people presumed to be immigrants. Correa and Thomas (2019) demonstrated the effects of racial scripts on CBP policies and culture and the

impact that the agency's institutionalization of racialized legal violence has on CBP agents' behavior. They found that Mexican American agents adopt an institutional culture of violence that leads them to repudiate their Mexican heritage and see themselves as American patriots, construct negative notions of Mexican and Latin American immigrants as dangerous and a threat to the nation, and carry these attitudes into their personal lives. The legal violence of immigration enforcement extends beyond the subjects of enforcement to those who participate in it, shaping their everyday lives and their relationships with family and community.

The 100-mile Border Zone in Arizona

The 100-mile Border Zone extends from the 375-mile international border in southern Arizona, includes eight counties, six ports of entry, and 12 checkpoint stations (U.S. Customs and Border Preotection, 2023). Over 40% of the Arizona population lives in the 100-mile Border Zone, passes through checkpoints frequently, if not daily, and many cross the U.S.–Mexico border frequently. Yet not all residents of the 100-mile border zone in Arizona are impacted equally by border and immigration enforcement. Although Latinxs—mostly of Mexican origin—make up 41% of the population in the four counties that border Mexico, they are disproportionately affected by CBP policies. Misra (2018) reported that in rural Arivaca, located 11 miles from the U.S.–Mexico border and where one of the traffic checkpoints is located, Latinx motorists were 26 times more likely to be asked for an identification card and 20 times more likely to be sent for secondary inspection than white motorists, yet they make up 7% of the local population.

These practices are amplified by the codification and application of immigration enforcement laws beyond the 100-mile border zone (Provine & Sanchez, 2011; Téllez, 2015). In 2007, the Arizona Department of Public Safety signed a 287(g) agreement with the Department of Homeland Security to train and allow state and local police to enforce immigration laws. Most notable were the increased workplace raids and roadblocks in areas predominantly inhabited by migrants commanded by former Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio (Campbell, 2022; Delgado, 2018; Provine & Sanchez, 2011; Romero, 2011; Sterling & Joffe-Block, 2021). Regardless of legal status, members of mixed-status families became frightened of leaving their homes as these raids, checkpoints, and operations relied on racial profiling (Romero, 2011). In May of 2010, Arizona passed the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (SB1070) which authorized state and local police officers to conduct random stops and check the immigration status of anyone they arrest, or suspect is in the country "illegally," and criminalized harboring or transporting undocumented immigrants and hiring and transporting day laborers. Four of its provisions were blocked by a temporary injunction in April 2011.

It is in this immigration enforcement climate that combines restrictive federal and state policies in which Arizona young adults grew up (Serratos, 2017). For them, these policies reflect uneasiness with demographic shifts and the scapegoating of

immigrants and people of color for the economic recession of 2007, leading them to feel targeted and attacked. Jiménez et al. (2021) found that many Arizona Latinxs can name specific state laws as well as the details of these laws, and that these anti-immigrant policies and practices erode their sense of belonging. Latinx border town residents normalize these practices as part of everyday life and enact strategies to avoid escalating conflict (Núñez, 2020; Stuesse, 2010). Regardless of how border residents navigate these practices, the constant immigration-related mistreatment takes a toll on their mental health as they constantly face questioning of their status and have to prove that they belong (Sabo et al., 2014).

Methodology

Based on data from a multi-method and multi-wave study using survey, photovoice,[1] and interviews with 342 U.S.-born Latinx, Native American, and White young adults ages 18 to 29[2], we examine the experiences with immigration enforcement among 277 young adults who grew up, live, or visit Arizona's 100-mile border zone (Pasco et al., Forthcoming). Although we draw from interviews with White participants (*n* = 126) in our analysis, we focus mostly on the Latinx subsample (*n* = 151), which included 108 women, 41 men, and two non-binary participants. The mean age for the Latinx sample was 23.5 years old, and most were second generation (i.e., U.S. born with at least one immigrant parent) (*n* = 125) and a quarter of our sample were 3+ generation (*n* = 26). Although the larger sample includes young adults from diverse Latin American origins, in this study, we focus on Mexican Americans. Our data derived mainly from participants who lived within or just north of the 100-mile enforcement zone, particularly Yuma–Somerton–San Luis. Tucson and Phoenix, and from some participants who lived outside the border zone since many had relatives, and/or grew up in border towns or frequented the area for recreation or to visit family.

Participants were recruited through social media, educational, social service, and volunteer organizations' listserv to participate in an online survey, and a subsample was selected to participate in in-depth interviews. Due to COVID-19 travel and contact restrictions, interviews were conducted virtually through zoom. All interviews were conducted in English and were recorded and transcribed verbatim using professional transcription services and uploaded to Dedoose for coding and data analysis. Although we did not ask any specific questions about the 100-mile border zone or immigration enforcement, participants frequently raised these issues in response to other questions regarding experiences with discrimination and political issues. As the theme of the border emerged in our coding, *keywords in context* were used to search for specific keywords that are related to the 100-mile border zone, such as "border," "immigration," and "checkpoint." These excerpts were further coded by research assistants to identify sub-themes, and any inconsistencies in the coding were resolved by the lead author. What we report here emerged organically in the interviews and highlights an ever-present immigration enforcement that criminalizes Latinxs, and the strategies used by them to minimize the harm inflicted by CBP.

Legal Violence in Arizona's LIC Border Zone

For the young adults in our sample, border enforcement is more than the soundbites they hear on the evening news. For them, it is akin to living in a militarized zone of LIC where they experience legal violence daily. Their stories show that legal violence happens in different ways, including physical and emotionally laden incidents that affect all residents of the borderlands regardless of legal status. For these young adults, reminders of immigration enforcement are tangible as they go about their lives. For instance, the border wall is a blunt physical reminder of immigration enforcement. Itzel, a 21-year-old woman from San Luis perceived as White or Mexican, recounted her surprise at seeing the new construction of the border wall on her way to work:

> I was driving, and I was like, "What?" I see lights. . ." What is that?" Then I noticed it was a big, tall wall, and they had lights, and it went down for like a mile more. . .I never saw that [before]. . .Then I realized it was the border wall.

Itzel's everyday experiences show the visible presence of immigration enforcement and the quick transformation of physical spaces in her community to accommodate anti-immigrant policies.

The border is also a trauma-inducing space as residents witness the unrelenting cruelty of stricter policies that have driven unauthorized immigrants to cross into isolated areas, where many perish. Eduardo, a 24-year-old Latinx and Native American from Tucson, recalls being "absolutely livid with what was happening on the southern border" as

> it's been a very dangerous situation because more and more people have been dying in the desert because we've militarized it and we've made sure that the only way for people to cross is through the most rural and basically the most no-man-land part of the desert.

Eduardo's comment highlights the legal violence that accompanies PTD policies that result in harm, and even death, for undocumented immigrants.

Participants who did not live in the border zone learned about these issues through experiential learning and volunteer work. When Kylie Colton, a 22-year-old white woman from Flagstaff, was in high school she witnessed Border Patrol agents slicing the jugs of water she and her classmates had placed in the desert to assist immigrants. She explains,

> All of the students there just basically helped put out jugs of water and blankets and cans of food. . .While we were there, Border Patrol was going around, slicing these milk jugs of water, and dumping out the food, and burning the blankets.

This trip left a lasting impression on Kylie who became critical of Border Patrol policies and actions that put immigrants' lives in peril.

Stories of immigrant death are not confined to remote areas of the desert, as they often happened in towns. Natasha, a 26-year-old Mexican woman from Yuma, shared

the horrific moment when she saw the body of a dead immigrant hanging from the border wall.

> [There was] a [dead] man hanging, and you could hear the cell phone ringing from his backpack, and he was just hanging there, and nobody had done anything. I think about that every day because you look at the wall and everybody reacts to it, and it is sad. . .he tried to jump the gate, and he had a backpack. The backpack got stuck on the gate, and it choked him. I never forgot about that.

Stories like this are a reminder for these youths of the inhumanity of these policies. Natasha's narrative shows the harmful and emotional effects of immigration policies on those who witness their lethal consequences. More populated areas are heavily under the watch and control of the Border Patrol. For example, Itzel notices the heavy presence of immigration enforcement and contrasts it with the lack of police in San Luis, a small border town near Yuma. Itzel explains,

> I rarely see cops out here. . .I feel like they could do more patrolling because there is a lot of crime here. . .I see the Border Patrol all the time. . .Last Friday actually I saw Border Patrols, and then I saw some like the trucks, and then I saw them on ATVs, and there was a helicopter, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, they're really trying to get on top of this person." And I feel like here I barely see cops like in my community as well.

Ceding policing duties to the Border Patrol is another example of legal violence toward immigrant communities because residents are less likely to report crimes for fear of deportation for themselves or others in their households (Golash-Boza, 2016; Kittrie, 2007; Macias-Rojas, 2016). It also leads to increased and sustained stress from living in a space that is physically and emotionally unpredictable as they do not know when they will be stopped and questioned by the CBP. Yet, their experiences with CBP and their interpretation of these experiences were vastly different due to its racialized nature.

Criminalizing Collateral Subjects in a LIC Zone

Immigration enforcement relies on racial scripts that profile Mexican-looking people as "illegals" and drug smugglers despite their legal status (Chavez, 2013; Molina, 2014; Flores-González, 2017; Jiménez et al., 2021, Szkupinski-Quiroga et al., 2014). Speaking to this dual criminalization, Karina, a 20-year-old woman from Phoenix who self-describes as "pretty tan. . .I have darker hair, darker eyebrows and dark eyes," said, "I feel people see my ethnicity as an illegal immigrant immediately and just assume that we are here to steal jobs and bring drugs." This racialization leads to heavier and more insidious policing of brown bodies, even in places meant to be "safe," such as schools and their neighborhoods (Ferguson, 2020; Rios, 2011; Waters, 2009). The heavy policing of brown bodies also affects participants who feel targeted because they "look Mexican." This is even worst in towns where CBP has a heavier presence than the police.

As Molina (2014) argued, the racialization of immigration is widespread and embedded in institutions and individuals. Participants say that in addition to racist policies and practices, a racist culture permeates in CBP that attracts people who hold racist views. Natasha, a 26-year-old woman from Yuma says, "I think it affects them too because there's a lot of racist people that apply for that job, for Border Patrol, and they treat the people a certain way." In tune with Correa and Thomas (2019), some participants say that the CBP culture is racist, and the stories they shared attest to the racialized nature of their encounters with CBP. For instance, Enrique, a 29-year-old man from Somerton who has dark skin and brown eyes, puts it this way:

> I think the Border Patrol and Customs ingrained their own customs and beliefs. It almost seems like a microaggression [when] you cross the border and they automatically speak to you in Spanish. And to me, for someone who speaks Spanish, maybe like, "Oh, well, they're just being accommodating" Where that's not true because. . .I respond in English, but I still get spoken to in Spanish. . . I think it's the culture embedded within like the CBP.

Indeed, Latinx young adults related stories involving racial profiling by CBP officers. Many pointed out that racial profiling is rampant in the agency and often more intense among Hispanic officers Heyman, 2002). Amalia, a light skinned 29-year-old woman who grew up in Nogales, explains that,

> Whenever it's somebody [CBP officer] who's Hispanic, I think it hits a little different where I'm just like, "Well, why? Why are you doing this to me?" Whereas when it's white people, I'm just kind of like, "Oh, whatever. That's just how they are." So, I think, yeah, it does hit home a little bit harder, and it just feels more intense.

Despite their citizenship, these youth experience stress from the uncertainty and unpredictability that marks their encounters with CBP.

International and internal checkpoints are particularly anxiety provoking as these young adults are uncertain of how they will be treated by CBP officers. Some recounted the stress of re-entering the U.S. after traveling to Mexico and their stories center on the presumption of their illegality. Saúl, a 23-year-old resident of Yuma, suspects that he is being singled out when he crosses the border because he looks Hispanic or Filipino. Saúl says,

> Whenever you cross the border, Customs and Border Patrol, I don't know if it's a specific script they have to just question everybody or if there's something just especially about me. And when they ask you, "Where are you from? What are you doing here? Where are you going?" I would say that's something that always stings a bit because I think it's like it'll be another Mexican or Hispanic that he's either lighter-skinned or there's something to them. There's that sense of doubt whether you're really from here.

It bothers Saúl to state the obvious, as he knows that these interrogations reflect his assumed non-citizen status since he has darker skin.

Despite carrying a U.S. passport, Mexican American young adults reported being extensively questioned by CBP. Like Saúl, Leticia, a 22-year-old woman from Yuma who says she is a really light-skin Mexican, is asked "crazy questions," which irks her because, "Dude, you have my paperwork in front of you." They'd be like, "Where are you going? Where do you go to school? Where do you live?" I'm just like, "Dude, you know where I live because it says right there. . .where I live. It's like really interrogating us." Not only are these young adults questioned, but they are often sent for secondary inspection in which their vehicles and anything in their possession are searched. Despite her light skin, Amalia experiences questioning of her legality in her frequent crossings at Nogales. She said that even though

> you present your passport [. . .] It was like, "I'm going to do a full vehicle search," even though I just crossed to get a haircut, or to go to the dentist, little things like that. It just felt like there was a lot more happening there.

Questioning and secondary inspections are recreated in CBP internal checkpoints. Violeta, a 20-year-old woman from Yuma who has dark hair, dark eyes, and tan skin, feels anxious when passing through internal checkpoints because CBP officers often assume she is not a U.S. citizen because of her "Mexican" racial features.

> The only time where I've been a little worried is when. . .crossing the border or at a checkpoint because. . .I think like "Will this Border Patrol officer think that I'm suspicious because of how I look and not believe that I'm a US citizen?". . .It can happen especially in Arizona [. . .] after SB1070 when people were more suspicious of you if you looked Latino.

While many participants self-described as having tan skin, dark hair, and dark eyes, those who have light skin faced similar treatment by CBP due to their "Mexican" cultural features such as surnames.

Many participants felt that CBP's questioning and secondary inspections were unnecessary. Enrique explains,

> Honestly, for me, it just seems there are a bunch of hassles there. And I say that because every time that I'm there, whatever I'm driving, there's always follow-up questions and they just seem to be invasive, which are pointless.

Similar to Enrique, many Mexican American young adults felt these intrusive measures were pointless. Yet, questioning and inspections are more than an inconvenience as they can quickly escalate into searches for drugs, particularly among young men who often had their vehicles searched for drugs. Enrique recounts how,

> Back in 2012, I was still young and had a Mustang, and that Border Patrol checkpoint asked me to go to secondary [inspection]. . .And then they're like, "We're going to bring in the drug dog." And they started sniffing, and they started making allegations that there was cocaine in my car. And I was like, "What do you mean? I have cocaine in my car?"

> "Well, the dog sniffed it; where is it?" "I have no idea. I don't know what you're talking about." "Well, he's sniffing cocaine." I'm like, "How do you know he is? I don't really understand." At the end of the day, nothing was found. And I don't know if it was a form for me to confess something, but they just put the dog on the seats. They looked around the seats, but there was nothing.

Enrique was scared, intimidated, and felt vulnerable and helpless in this encounter.

Far from being an isolated incident, other young men related similar stories. Norberto, a 24-year-old man from Phoenix who self-describes as light skin but with a Mexican accent, recounted how CBP ripped the back seat of his car during an inspection.

> [At] the checkpoint. . .they asked us, like, "Oh, where you're from?". . .At the time, we didn't know, but there's another person behind us, a Border Patrol agent, and he opened up the back side of the car. And, at the time, we didn't know, but he actually cut open the seat. And he took out. . .like fluff in the seat. But we didn't know until we got home because we had some stuff in the back of the car.

Each time they go through checkpoints, these young adults risk more than wasting their time. CBP can bring drug-sniffing dogs, single them out for random car inspections, and destroy their property without reason, and they feel there is nothing they can do to push back.

In contrast to Mexican Americans' experiences at Border Patrol checkpoints, White motorists are often waved through checkpoints with no questions asked. Denny Kendall, a 26-year-old White man from Yuma is aware of the racial profiling at checkpoints.

> When I go through a Border Patrol stop I roll my window down. [They'd ask] are you a U.S. citizen and I'd say yes, and they'd say have a nice day and I keep driving on, right?. . .I never got pulled over to go into secondary to have my car searched or anything like that. . . I definitely have friends who because they were Black or Hispanic, they have had to do that.

Another White participant from Yuma, Wyatt Parker, age 20, shared a similar experience adding that, "there are privileges to being Caucasian. . .we all have a struggle, but when it comes to- if a police officer stopped me, I wouldn't be as worried as somebody else who doesn't look like me." For White residents like Denny and Wyatt, Border Patrol checkpoints were a hassle but inconsequential.

Navigating Interactions with CBP

The Mexican American youth in our study developed various strategies to help mitigate discrimination from CBP agents. Some obtained a Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) card, which facilitates and expedites preapproved travelers' entry into the U.S. from Canada and Mexico (Mann, 2014).

Frances, a 22-year-old woman from Tucson who says she is "white but with a Hispanic name," paid the $122 fee to get a SENTRI card to expedite her entry from Mexico.

> It's kind of [a] fast-pass. . .so you don't have to wait in line in order to cross. . .and normally when you have SENTRI, that means you're a trusted traveler, so they don't ask you questions. . .It's just way faster. So, they won't ask you where you're going or what you did in Mexico or to declare anything because they're already assuming that you're a trusted traveler.

Yet, the SENTRI card did not always protect them from lengthy questioning and secondary inspections, particularly for those who are darker skin or "look Mexican." Frances recounted an instance in which her SENTRI card allowed her to cross expeditiously, but her sister, who she describes as "a lot darker" was subjected to lengthy questioning despite also holding a SENTRI card.

> [My sister], who's a lot darker than I am, didn't have the same experience. The custom [officer] started asking her a bunch of questions. "How did she get the SENTRI." He asked her if we were related. And my sister told the guy, "Yes," we were sisters. And he said, "You're sisters? You don't look like sisters." And then he was like. "Are you a U.S. citizen?" And then on the SENTRI, it specifically says U.S. citizen on it. And so, my sister was like, "Yes, I'm a U.S. citizen." And he was like, "You don't look like a U.S. citizen," and then he started. . . asking her a bunch of questions.

"You don't look like a U.S. citizen" shows how racial scripts operate to exclude non-whites by equating whiteness to citizenship while casting doubt on non-whites' right to belong. Having their citizenship continuously questioned is stressful as it places the burden of proof on these young Mexican Americans who must comply while keeping their composure. Similar to Frances, Enrique notes the arbitrariness in the process.

> I've been sent to secondary [inspection] a few times. And they happened more when I was a lot younger. Now that I'm older, I have a SENTRI, which is the fast track. So, it's kind of a privilege. So, I got that more for me as an insurance that I won't always be sent a secondary [inspection] and waste an hour to an hour and a half of my life waiting there as they inspect my car, but I would always get sent to secondary every time. And it just seemed more of a harassment.

The experiences Frances and Enrique recount are not restricted to border crossing as they are often repeated when passing through in-land checkpoints.

Another strategy engaged by these youths was to remain calm and compliant to speed up the process by not antagonizing CBP officers. Indeed, the participants had to develop patience and restraint from an early age to de-escalate situations with CBP. Norberto says that "we would try not to show our anger in front of them [agents], because we wouldn't want them to gain that power of like "You're making me feel this." Ariana, a 22-year-old woman from Yuma who says she looks and sounds Mexican, also expressed frustration when dealing with internal checkpoints by saying,

"I just wanted to get out of Yuma at that point, so I didn't like that they were stopping us and then, again, pretty frustrated and angry that we're always judged just because of our skin color." Having to mask their frustration and hold back their anger leads to feelings of defeat at an early age. While most participants remain quiet and compliant when passing through internal checkpoints, their patience is sometimes tested, and they fight back. Sonia, 28-year-old woman from Tucson who says people assume she is Mexican or Native American, explained how she has dealt with hostility in her border town:

> I've had hostile interactions with law enforcement. . .specifically within Border Patrol. . . I've just really had negative experiences with that agency and my citizenship is constantly in question based on how I look. . .Then to make things move faster, you give in, and you conform to those [requests], which I've just decided to stop doing. I just really don't answer their questions anymore. You want to understand that they have jobs to do, but you also recognize that their agency is really reinforcing these kinds of stereotypes and biases.

Frustrated by CBP's common practices of racial profiling and discrimination, Sonia has decided to stop answering their questions.

Although questioning and secondary inspections are a hassle for citizens, these can have severe consequences for non-citizens for whom the threat of deportation is ever-present. Thus, remaining calm and compliant is particularly important to protect non-citizen companions.

Cristal, a 20-year-old woman from San Luis who others see as Mexican because of her facial traits and skin color, recounts her exasperation with CBP and the helplessness she felt when crossing with her legal permanent resident boyfriend.

> We were crossing the border, and they sent us to a secondary inspection. And me and my sister were really mad because we had been in line to cross into the United States for like six hours. And then, they sent us to secondary inspection [which would take] like another two hours. So, we were really mad. And we were just going to tell the Border Patrol, like, "Let us go." And, my boyfriend was like, "You can't do that. Like, if I get in trouble, I can get deported. I can get my permanent resident card taken away." And that was when I really realized "I'm American. I have these privileges that can't be taken away from me." I think that would be the first instance when I really realized that I was American.

These experiences show the effects of the immigration regime's legal violence on citizens. Like Cristal, most Mexican–American young adults in the sample are part of extended mixed-status families and communities, and know that their non-citizen loved ones, even those with legal permanent status, are unprotected from detention and deportation. For Cristal, the only thing that makes her American is her citizenship which protects her from legal complications, but not from CBP mistreatment. This sentiment was also expressed by Tianna, a 28-year-old Latina and Native American looking woman who grew up in Yuma;

> I think it means that we have to be a little more careful. I think there's a sentiment that we're visitors, or we're very new to being American. I guess, being raised in a border town, I kind of got that feeling a lot more where the older population. I never faced any kind of direct anything, but there is this kind of feeling of: "Did they cross the border, or have they been here? Do they only speak Spanish?". . .The way you look kind of determines that [how you are treated].

Being questioned by CBP or flagged for secondary inspection makes Tianna and the other participants feel like second class citizens and reflects the insidious and damaging effect of legal violence on their sense of safety, security, and belonging to the nation.

Conclusion

Overall, our findings show the stress that Mexican American and Latinx U.S. citizens endure while living in Arizona's 100-mile border enforcement zone or traveling through it. These young adults must also practice extra emotional management and maturity at a young age even when faced with unjust treatment from CBP. Their narratives expressed anxiety and frustration and how it affected their well-being, and lack of power to speak against injustices at the hands of CBP and the harming effect of legal violence perpetrated in the name of immigration enforcement.

By providing a snapshot of their lives, we call attention to the collateral consequences of immigration enforcement in border zones. Anyone within 100-mile from U.S. borders is a potential target of enforcement regardless of their legal status, including two-thirds of the U.S. population whose residences and places of employment fall within all the U.S. border zones (Canada, Mexico, and the Atlantic and Pacific shores). These experiences are much more frequent and intense for residents of the 100-mile southern border zone due to the concentration of immigration enforcement in the U.S.–Mexico borderlands. Racial profiling as a surveillance and policing tool leads to the disproportionate violation of the constitutional rights of non-white citizens who consequently enjoy lesser rights, liberties, and privileges. As a nation, we should question the constitutionality of policies that single out a particular kind of citizen, relegating them to second-class status that allows the regular violation of their civil rights. Since 96% of individuals who cross the U.S.–Mexico border annually are U.S. citizens (Bratton & Tandy 2016), we can safely assume that they must bear the brunt of mistreatment at the hands of CBP. The stress of racial profiling and mistreatment threatens the physical and emotional well-being of U.S. citizens, particularly those who live in the southern border region and cross the border frequently.

Our findings show the arbitrary and abusive actions of CBP officers against immigrants and citizens (see Rummier, 2019). Similar irregularities were documented by the Department of Homeland Security in a 2016 report. The Department of Homeland Security found that "CBP's Border Patrol Agents interact with at least 27 million people annually, most of whom are U.S. Citizens (74,000 daily) at the 34 checkpoints it operates in the interior of the southwest border" (Bratton & Tandy 2016: 23). The

report acknowledges that the agency is rampant with corruption and excessive use of force, and that there is no system in place to review and weed out corrupt and abusive CBP personnel (see Jervis, 2021). It has been 7 years since the publication of this report, but it is neither clear if any remedies have been put in place, nor what procedures are holding employees who mistreat immigrants and U.S. citizens accountable for their abusive actions. Although the report sought remediations and a more effective system to combat CBP corruption and civil rights violations, our participants' narratives show that CBP continues to fall short of reaching its commitment to professionalism, courtesy, and respect for human dignity. Perhaps wearing body cameras should be required for CBP officers to document abuse as well as deter officers from engaging in the violation of rights of the people they interact with.

Although some policies, such as the SENTRI program, seek to expedite entry, our findings show how the continuous practice of racial profiling nullifies their intended purpose. Even with a SENTRI card, crossing the border is highly unpredictable as SENTRI carriers are often stopped and taken to secondary inspection. Although unpredictable, these practices are not random as it is predominantly Latinx SENTRI carriers who are singled out. We question the purpose of the SENTRI program as it seems to be a source of revenue for CBP and less about security, since people who have been vetted are still subjected to questioning and inspection. In either case, the SENTRI program is ineffective and untruthful to those who pay fees to ensure a smooth and quick pass through border checkpoints, and reform of this program is urgently needed.

Another way of holding CBP accountable for its abusive actions and lessening the damage that their policies have on the physical and mental health of U.S. citizens (and immigrants) is to provide compensation for the violation of civil rights. Being constantly under surveillance and being questioned and detained for secondary inspection take a toll on people's emotional well-being. Many border residents do all that is in their power to ensure an uneventful interaction with CBP, but when passports and SENTRI cards do not protect them, they feel powerless, vulnerable, and at the mercy of CBP officers. Besides compensation for the emotional distress caused by CBP civil rights violations, there is also material compensation for the time delays as well as for property damaged during secondary inspection. Based on our data, we are compelled to call for the reform of CBP policies, particularly those that target people on the basis of racial and cultural traits, for the protection of the civil rights of U.S. citizens and non-citizens living or passing through the border zone, and compensation for those whose rights have been violated.

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Notes

1. See Pasco et al. (Forthcoming).
2. We conducted four waves of interviews from Fall 2020 to Summer 2023. The size of our sample decreased by wave (W1 = 342, W2 = 234, W3 = 166, and W4 = 99), and 144 of the original sample participated in the Photovoice study.

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Author Biographies

Nilda Flores-González is Professor at Arizona State University. Her research explores the effects of racialization on the ways in which Latino youth understand national belonging. She is the author of "Citizens but not Americans: Race and Belonging among Latino Millennials" (NYU Press, 2017).

Emir Estrada is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Arizona State University in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change. She is the author of *Kids at Work: Latinx Families Selling Food on the Streets of Los Angeles* (2019), winner of the 2020 American Sociological Association Outstanding Scholarly Contribution Award and the 2021 AAHHE Book of the year.

Michelle Téllez is an Associate Professor in the Department of Mexican American Studies at the University of Arizona. She is the author of *Border Women and the Community of Maclovio Rojas: Autonomy in the Spaces of Neoliberal Neglect* (2021), winner of the 2023 National Association of Chicana/o Studies Book of the Year Award.

Daniela Carreon is a second-year Ph.D. in sociology at Arizona State University Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics. Her research interests are within Latino families with a particular focus on the intersection of motherhood and cancer diagnosis. Her research delves into identity disruption/adjustment, emotions, and death/dying.

Brittany Romanello holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Arizona State University. Her research explored how race, ethnicity, legal status, and religious affiliations shape Latina Mormon's social networks, partnerships, and parenting. As an ASU Faculty Associate and Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow, she continues to study the US Southwest borderlands social landscapes.