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## The Gendered Effects of Local Immigration Enforcement: Latinas' Social Isolation in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and Phoenix

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### Abstract

The 2017 revitalization of the controversial Security Communities program, which requires local law enforcement to cooperate with federal immigration officials in the United States, has made it urgent to better understand such enforcement programs' effects on the well-being of Latinas/os, especially the foreign-born. Social isolation from increased immigration enforcement can have significant impacts on economic, social, and health outcomes among Latina/o immigrants and non-immigrants. This article analyzes the gendered impacts of different levels of increased local involvement in immigration enforcement on social isolation, using a survey of over 2000 Latinas/os in four large US cities, all considered to be traditional destinations. Unsurprisingly, respondents reported increased social isolation resulting from local law enforcement's involvement in immigration enforcement. In contrast to results from previous research, our analysis found that women and men were equally likely to feel socially isolated and that having children led to more social isolation for both women and men. Personal and vicarious experiences with immigration enforcement, as well as living in Phoenix and Houston — two urban areas with the strictest enforcement regimes — were strongly related to social isolation. Our results indicate that local authorities' increased involvement in immigration enforcement can lead to more social isolation for Latina immigrants, particularly those who have children, aligning their experiences with men's and, thus, undermining Latinas' previously recognized role as bridges between their families and social institutions and as community builders.

### Keywords

Latina immigrants; social isolation; immigration enforcement

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## Introduction

Immigration enforcement and control have been long considered plenary powers of the US federal government, with state and local governments playing almost no role (Coutin, Richland, and Fortin, 2014). The past 20 years, however, have seen the US federal government increasingly delegating its immigration powers to state and local governments, a transformation most apparent in the granting of local law enforcement agencies the power to enforce federal immigration provisions through the 287(g) and Secure Communities programs.<sup>1</sup> This “devolution” in immigration enforcement (Varsanyi 2010) has been accompanied by a turn to a more punitive approach to enforcement strategies based on and sustained by a dramatic increase in immigrant detention and deportation, as well as the *threat* of deportation, or “deportability” (de Genova 2004). These policies and their effects have taken on more urgency with new guidelines implemented by the Trump administration, especially vis-à-vis interior enforcement and the so-called “sanctuary” cities and states (see Abrego et al. 2017; Gonzalez O’Brien, Collingwood, and El-Khatib 2019).

Immigration scholarship provides ample evidence of the negative effects of this new enforcement approach, including increased fear in Latina/o communities and avoiding contact with institutions (Dreby 2015; Getrich 2013; Szkupinski Quiroga, Medina, and Glick 2014; Martinez and Ortega 2019; Wang and Neeraj 2019). The vast enforcement apparatus relying on the 287(g) and Secure Communities programs has generated a constant threat and fear of detention and deportation among undocumented (and also lawful permanent resident) immigrants and their families (Negi 2013; Dreby 2015). This constant threat has affected entire communities throughout the United States (Massey and Sánchez 2010; Menjívar and Abrego 2012; Aranda, Menjívar, and Donato 2014; Armenta 2017), with important differences across contexts in experiences of deportability (Menjívar and Kanstroom 2014; Alvord, Menjívar, and Gómez Cervantes 2018; Huang and Yang 2018; Moinester 2018; Young et al. 2018). Deportability has instilled fear not only in individuals who are the targets of this enforcement (Donato and Armenta 2011) but also in those who are not directly targeted, such as US-born family members who fear separation from their families (Dreby 2015; Menjívar et al. 2018). These effects have broad ramifications, extending across generations (Yoshikawa 2011; Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015; Berger Cardoso et al. 2018) through what Enriquez (2015) calls “generational punishment” and can touch even nonimmigrants who fear their peers may be deported (Santos and Menjívar 2013). This constant fear has emotional and traumatic effects, particularly among Latina/o immigrants (Gonzales and Chavez 2012) and their families (Dreby 2015; Menjívar et al. 2018), and negative effects on the mental and emotional health of immigrant youth (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, and Dedios 2013). This threat has also been found to positively predict stress among immigrants in general (Arbona et al. 2010). Deportability has led immigrants, especially Latinas/os, to alter their daily routines to avoid detection (Abrego 2011; Gonzales

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<sup>1</sup>The 287(g) program, a component of the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, created partnerships between federal and state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce federal laws that seek to identify and remove immigrants deemed removable under immigration law. The Secure Communities Program, created in 2008, is a similar partnership that focuses on information sharing between the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security. This program checks fingerprints of detained individuals against immigration databases for the purpose of identifying and removing immigrants. Both programs significantly increase the likelihood that an encounter for Latinas/os with law enforcement will lead to the checking of immigration status.

and Chavez 2012), and its effects are so powerful that they can also lead immigrants to transform their understandings of the self in enduring fashion (Menjívar and Lakhani 2016). Deportability, therefore, alters immigrants' lives in multifaceted ways, in both the short and long term.

Deportability, however, is not experienced in a homogenous manner, and immigrants' social positions intersect to modify its effects (see Crenshaw 1991). Younger and older immigrants, for example, have different experiences of and respond dis-similarly to deportability (Abrego 2014; Patler and Pirtle 2018), as do women and men (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Das Gupta 2014). Race and ethnicity also shape deportability's contours, with research finding that even though Latina/o immigrants comprise about two thirds of undocumented immigrants in the United States, they make up approximately 95 percent of the detained and deported (Passel and Cohn 2011; Menjívar, Abrego, and Schmalzbauer 2016). This situation has led scholars to highlight enforcement's racialized character (Donato and Armenta 2011; Kibria, Bowman, and O'Leary 2013; Armenta 2017) and to argue that legal status today serves as a proxy for race (Luibhéid 2013; Møller 2014; Menjívar, Abrego, and Schmalzbauer 2016).

In this article, we explore the gendered and raced effects of the punitive turn in immigration enforcement in the United States in traditional destination contexts with varying levels of local involvement in immigration enforcement. In particular, we examine the effects of increased interior enforcement on social isolation among Latina immigrants, especially mothers, as new enforcement strategies have contributed to increased levels of fear of spending time outside the home among these women. Increased social isolation, in turn, contributes to weakening Latina immigrants' links to social institutions and their ability to build community. To examine this process, we analyze a random sample survey, conducted in 2012, of 2004 Latinas/os in four large US cities (Los Angeles, California; Phoenix, Arizona; Chicago, Illinois; and Houston, Texas) on their perceptions of local law enforcement involvement in immigration enforcement. This survey, which includes a significant number of women, many with children, is, to our knowledge, the largest random sample of Latinas/os with different legal and citizenship status in the United States and is designed specifically to capture the effects of local enforcement of immigration law.

Increased interior enforcement in traditional and new destinations that targets Latina/o immigrants, often regardless of legal status, contributes to deportability, instilling in these immigrants fear of contacting public institutions and spending time in public spaces. This situation has direct implications for Latinas in particular, given that they often fulfill their roles of family caretakers by connecting, through social networks, their families to public institutions. Thus, we hypothesize that programs such as Secure Communities undermine the potential of Latina immigrants' public presence and involvement and their social networks by increasing their social isolation (cf. Valdez, Padilla, and Valentine 2013). Our examination of the interaction between gender and having children on social isolation also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how the deportability threat is altering social practices and the constitution of immigrant communities across the country. These questions are especially pertinent today, as the expansive Secure Communities program was reinstated in 2017 with an Executive Order (EO) signed by President Trump (White

House 2017) after a 3-year hiatus, due to concerns with racial profiling, under the Obama administration.

To develop these arguments, we first summarize the Secure Communities program and similar enforcement programs, before synthesizing the literature on social networks and social capital among immigrants, with special attention to gender and immigrant women's positions in these dynamics. We then present the data and methods we utilized and our analysis, ending with a discussion of the implications of our findings. In doing so, we highlight the multiple consequences of immigration enforcement-related social isolation for Latina immigrants and nonimmigrants alike, including socioeconomic, health, and community-level effects. As we show, living in fear affects the ability of documented and undocumented Latina immigrants both to establish formal and informal connections with institutions necessary to care for their children and families as they desire and to work outside the home in desired jobs. In this way, immigration enforcement-related social isolation may have pervasive effects on immigrant mothering practices in the long run (Abrego and Menjivar 2011).

## Secure Communities in Context

The 287(g) program was included in the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA). It allows state and local law enforcement agencies to enter into voluntary agreements with the federal government to enforce immigration laws. As of 2019, 79 agreements were in place with local governments in 21 states (<https://www.ice.gov/287g>). The US Secretary of Homeland Security reported that “from January 2006 through September 2015, the 287(g) program led to the identification of more than 402,000 removable aliens, primarily through encounters at local jails” (Kelly 2017). In 2009, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) modified the 287(g) program to place more emphasis on targeting criminal aliens (Dowling and Inda 2013). By 2016 less than 40 local jurisdictions were part of the program, but it was resurrected by the Trump administration in 2017.

The Secure Communities program, part of ICE's Agreements of Cooperation in Communities to Enhance Safety and Security (ACCESS), was initiated in 2008, ostensibly to target criminal aliens.<sup>2</sup> Jurisdictions participating in this program were required to run the fingerprints of all individuals booked into jail against federal immigration and criminal databases.<sup>3</sup> If a match was found, ICE could choose to issue a “detainer” on that person, which required the local agency to hold the person for 48 hours after their scheduled release so that ICE could interview the detainee and decide whether to start deportation proceedings. Despite ICE's claims that Secure Communities was a “simple and common-sense way to carry out ICE's priorities” and that only federal immigration agents were involved in immigration decisions under the program,<sup>4</sup> numerous reports have shown that Secure Communities significantly increased local law enforcement agencies' involvement in immigration enforcement (e.g., Waslin 2011; Pedroza 2013).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ice.gov/secure-communities>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/other/secure-communities-s-comm>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ice.gov/secure\\_communities/](http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/)

Further, Secure Communities seems to have encouraged local law enforcement to target Latinas/os through pretext stops, which entail stopping individuals under the guise of smaller infractions such as motor vehicle violations to check for immigration status (see Haas 2011). Numerous mistakes were also made in the program's implementation, including the detainment of several US-citizen Latinas/os, and some detainees were kept much longer than the maximum 48 hours (Waslin 2011). In addition, ICE's claim that the program was meant to target "criminal aliens," especially those convicted of more serious Level-1 crimes such as homicide, kidnapping, sexual assault, cruelty toward child or spouse, and more serious drug offenses, is belied by statistics that show that in 2012, of the 220,322 immigrants removed, only 61,348 were removed for Level-1 crimes, and 54,258 were noncriminals (Gill 2013, 2061–62). Although Secure Communities began as a voluntary program, by 2011 the Obama Administration had changed participation rules to make it mandatory for all local and state jurisdictions (Chishti, Bergeron, and Hoyt 2011). By 2014 all local jurisdictions in the United States were part of the program, although numerous local agencies and individuals successfully challenged the program's constitutionality on Fourth Amendment grounds (Johnson 2014), leading to the program's suspension in November 2014.

When the Secure Communities program was discontinued, its detainer provision that required local law enforcement to notify ICE of a release of someone who might be in the country without legal status was kept (American Immigration Council 2017). In July 2015, a successor program, entitled the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), began (American Immigration Council 2017). PEP created enforcement priorities to supposedly focus on detaining immigrants who had committed serious offenses (e.g., an aggravated felony, commission of a felony in which immigration status was involved, or apprehension while attempting to enter the United States) or had been involved in an "organized criminal gang" or posed "a danger to national security" (<https://www.ice.gov/pep>). The ICE enforcement priorities, however, were broad, and much discretion remained in the hands of local law enforcement agencies, which led to uneven enforcement practices across states and localities (American Immigration Council 2017).

In the first week of his administration in January 2017, President Trump signed EO 13768, which ended PEP and reinstated Secure Communities (White House 2017). The order also called for withholding federal grants to local and state jurisdictions that refused to cooperate with federal immigration officials in reporting undocumented individuals (White House 2017). Moreover, EO 13768 expanded the definition of those considered to be "priorities" for deportation to include undocumented immigrants charged with a crime, even a minor offense, or *suspected* of committing a crime. The order also intensified and expanded enforcement beyond the border to the US interior, including workplace raids, increasing the likelihood of Latinas/os' identification and detection, and amplifying fears of detention and deportation in mostly Latina/o communities across states and localities (Abrego et al. 2017).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>In the Trump administration's first months, the number of civil immigration arrests increased 38 percent compared to the previous year (Duara 2017).

## The Four Jurisdictions under Study

We refer to each of the four jurisdictions under study by their largest city, even though our data are countywide. These jurisdictions were selected because they vary dramatically in geography, demographics, historical development, and political culture, as well as in immigration enforcement policies, especially their cooperation with the federal government on detentions and deportations. However, they are all considered to be traditional destinations. Los Angeles and Chicago are self-proclaimed sanctuary cities. Conversely, Houston and Phoenix have long histories of local law enforcement engaged with immigration enforcement (Eagly 2013), with Phoenix long having a reputation for some of the most draconian policies targeting immigrants in the country (Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier 2012; CNA 2019). Latina/o immigrants living in these varying contexts of enforcement are well informed about such enforcement activities, obtaining daily information from the media, especially Spanish-language media (Menjívar 2016).

Chicago (Cook County) has been a sanctuary city since 1985, when city policy mandated that authorities could not ask individuals about immigration status (Rumore 2019). The policy became city law in 2006, effectively prohibiting city agencies from asking about the immigration status of people seeking city services or the victims or witnesses of crimes (Rumore 2019). In 2011 Cook County passed an “immigration detainer ordinance” to ignore all ICE detainer requests, a vital part of the 287(g) and Secure Communities programs (Mitchell 2011). Notwithstanding, as van Cleeve (2016) observes, a racialized culture permeates this county’s criminal justice system, disadvantaging Latinas/os moving through it.

Los Angeles City and County also are considered sanctuary jurisdictions; however, they have been slower and less consistent than Chicago to enact sanctuary-type policies. While Los Angeles County joined the Secure Communities program in 2009, by 2015, its County Board had withdrawn from the 287(g) program (Linthicum and Tanfani 2015). That same year, Los Angeles County signed on to the PEP program, with the stipulation that the Sheriff only notify ICE of very serious crimes (Linthicum and Tanfani 2015). More recently, in response to the Trump administration’s EO 13768, Chicago (Cook County) and Los Angeles City and County have set up legal defense funds for undocumented immigrants targeted by ICE.

Houston (Harris County) is known for tough immigration enforcement policies (Eagly 2013). It signed on early to the voluntary 287(g) program and was a pilot for the Secure Communities program (Eagly 2013). Eagly (2013) notes that Harris County implemented a number of policies that treat undocumented defendants more punitively than documented defendants “with respect to bail eligibility, plea bargaining, and sentencing” (1170). While most jurisdictions across the United States had cancelled their participation in the 287(g) program by 2016, Houston maintained theirs until a new sheriff took office in 2017. However, Houston, unlike Phoenix, has not allowed law enforcement officials to ask about immigration status in the course of street policing, and its 287(g) agreement was terminated in February 2017, upon the election of a new county sheriff (Pinkerton and Barned-Smith 2017).

For approximately a decade, Phoenix (Maricopa County) has had some of the toughest anti-immigrant policies in the United States (Eagly 2013). The Maricopa County Sheriff's Department (MCSO) has been routinely accused of systemic discrimination and other human rights abuses against Latina/o and immigrant populations (Eagly 2013; *Melendres v. Arpaio* 2013). Similar to Houston, Maricopa County was an early adopter of the 287(g) and Secure Communities programs (Varsanyi 2011). However, the state of Arizona also implemented an array of laws and policies that amplified immigration enforcement. Examples include a 2005 anti-smuggling law broadly interpreted to include prosecuting immigrants for conspiring to smuggle themselves and the Legal Arizona Workers Act of 2008 that together with the state's own version of identity theft laws was used in workplace raids that predominantly targeted Latinas/os (Menjívar 2014a; Menjívar and Enchautegui 2015). MCSO also set up checkpoints throughout the county, but mostly in heavily Latina/o neighborhoods, actions later ruled unconstitutional because they racially profiled Latinas/os (*Arizona v. United States* 2012). Such practices, however, continue to this day (CNA 2019).

The infamous SB 1070 was passed in Arizona in 2010, with its "show me your papers" provision requiring law enforcement officials to determine an individual's legal status during a lawful encounter (*Arizona v. United States* 2012; Guttentag 2012). The Phoenix Police Department, however, had directed its force to determine the immigration status of all lawfully detained suspects since 2008 (Eagly 2013, 1182). Then Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano issued a memo in December 2011 stopping MCSO's participation in the 287(g) and Secure Communities programs due to "findings of discriminatory policing practices." In 2012, the US Supreme Court ruled that most of SB 1070's provisions were unconstitutional (Guttentag 2012). However, the "show me your papers" provision remained and required law enforcement officials to determine the legal status of anyone arrested or detained if there was "reasonable suspicion" that the individual was undocumented (*Arizona v. United States* 2012; Peard 2018). The implementation of what remains of SB1070 is being monitored, and guidelines to rein in potential racial profiling and curtail illegal stops were established in 2016. However, much confusion remains regarding the "show me your papers" (Section 2B) portion, as no state court has interpreted its meaning and many of the draconian policies continue to the present (Peard 2018).

The four city/county approaches to immigration enforcement create varying levels of fear of detection and deportation across primarily Latina/o immigrant communities. Eagly (2013, 1214) reports that "in Maricopa County only 42% of individuals screened through Secure Communities and later deported had felonies or multiple misdemeanors." Los Angeles, in comparison to Houston and Phoenix, had "the largest percentage of deportations of serious Level 1 offenders" and about half the number of "deportations that result[ed] from low-grade misdemeanors (Level 3)" (1214). Given the differences in local police's participation in immigration enforcement across the four metropolitan areas, we hope to shed light on how differential enforcement practices affect Latinas/os' feelings of social isolation, with potential impacts on Latinas' roles as community builders, as bridges to institutions, and as advocates for their families (Menjívar 2002; Jiménez 2010; Martínez 2010; Abrego and Menjívar 2011; Terriquez 2012).

## Social Isolation, Social Networks, and the Enforcement Context

Secure Communities has had and continues to have detrimental effects on Latina/o communities, separating families and causing a climate of fear whereby Latina/o immigrants can be targeted by local law enforcement at any time (Abrego et al. 2017). Under the initial Secure Communities program, deportations throughout the United States increased 400 percent, leading to “families torn apart by the removals of undocumented spouses, parents, siblings, and children convicted only of non-violent crimes, traffic violations, or other minor infractions” (Ray 2011). These enforcement efforts also exacerbated the climate of fear among Latinas/os in the United States, undermining trust in local law enforcement and a sense of community (Martinez, Garcia, and Vasquez 2008). In addition, Security Communities undermined the crucial U-Visa program established specifically to protect immigrant victims of domestic violence and other abuses by making it less likely that immigrant women would report domestic violence to the authorities (Gill 2013). Not surprisingly, immigration enforcement efforts such as these have generated fear and uncertainty among Latinas/os (Pew Center 2010), leading many to worry that they, their family, or their friends will be deported (Lopez, Taylor, Funk, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013; Stringer 2018).

Despite these documented impacts, relatively little systematic research has analyzed how social cleavages, such as race, social class, and gender, intersect with such enforcement strategies. In particular, we know very little about the gendered effects of Secure Communities and the PEP, especially whether women experience such enforcement differently. Our study addresses this gap by examining these gendered effects and asking whether these programs increase Latinas’ social isolation and with what consequences.

Immigrant women, especially Latinas, often create and cultivate the social networks on which communities are rooted (Menjívar 2000). Some early studies of Latinas/os’ postmigration experiences in a range of US locations, for example, showed that Latina immigrants successfully established informal social networks that provided access for their families to larger opportunities in the community (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjívar 2000, 2002). Latina immigrants, especially those with children, have been shown to be more likely to tap into these networks because gendered expectations of behavior place them as their families’ caretakers (Menjívar 2002). These social ties can aid women with childcare and help them access support services, health care providers, as well as information about their children’s education (Menjívar 2000, 2002; Delgado-Gaitan 2005; Martinez 2010; Valdez, Padilla, and Valentine 2013). In fact, research has found that after 10 years of US residence, immigrant Latina mothers’ participation in their children’s schools resembles that of their US-born counterparts (Terriquez 2012). From their position as mothers, Latina immigrants, regardless of legal status, have organized protests against expanded enforcement.<sup>6</sup> In addition to linking their families to social institutions and creating community, Latina immigrant women, by spending time in those spaces (e.g., children’s schools, doctor’s clinics, and churches), develop and cultivate beneficial networks that come from “deliberate networking” (e.g., Small 2009). Such networks are also critical when Latina immigrant

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.momsrising.org/blog/letter-from-immigrant-mothers-in-phoenix>



women work outside the home, as many do (Donato et al. 2008; Flippen 2016). For instance, a study of Guatemalans in Houston found that immigrant women who worked cleaning homes and lived in their employers' homes (and, thus, isolated from other co-ethnics) had significantly reduced networks and were cut off from the benefits that these social ties bring (Hagan 1998).

However, recent studies have shown that under conditions of increased immigration enforcement and anti-immigrant climate, Latina immigrants are less likely to develop extended social networks (Ornelas et al. 2009). Latina (and Latino) immigrant parents under a regime of heightened immigration enforcement report that their social networks are constantly changing and weakened (Ayón 2017). For Latina/o immigrants, an increased fear of detention and deportation stemming from interior immigration enforcement severely limits the deployment of social networks and can put more strain on networks of families and close friends (Negi 2013; Schmalzbauer 2014; Dreby 2015), especially in newer immigrant destinations where these networks may not be extensive and communities may not yet be resourceful. Further, social networks and support systems may be disrupted when families must relocate to other locations for legal or employment reasons or return to their origin country through deportation or under threat (see Roberts, Menjívar, and Rodriguez 2017). Amplified interior enforcement elevates Latina immigrants' fear of spending time in public spaces or outside the home (Gómez Cervantes et al. 2018), undermining the deployment of social ties (Ayón 2017), creating mistrust in social institutions (Gómez Cervantes et al. 2018) that can lead to "institutional apathy" (Estrada, Ebert, and Halla Lore 2016), and decreasing service utilization among Latina/o immigrants (Latz, Lusk, and Heyman 2019). A recent survey of educators (Ee and Gandara 2020) points to the negative effects of enforcement on immigrant parents' involvement in their children's schools.

The increased fear of detention and deportation can differentially impact Latina/o immigrants (Schmalzbauer 2014), reduce the advantages immigrant women once had in developing extended networks, and increase their social isolation (Bathum and Bauman 2007; Reina, Maldonado, and Lohman 2013; Valdez, Padilla, and Valentine 2013). Importantly, these effects may vary by the specific context where immigrants live (Dreby and Schmalzbauer 2013; Schmalzbauer 2014). For instance, Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro (2011) found that North Carolina's anti-immigrant climate kept Latina immigrants from attending community events or going to the park, library, or local restaurants (see also Schmalzbauer 2014). In other cases, Latina immigrants were found to rarely leave their homes, with several using the term *encerrada* (closed in) to describe their work lives and general experiences in the United States (Hurtado de-Mendoza et al. 2014; Schmalzbauer 2014; Gómez Cervantes et al. 2018). As a result, these women's formal contacts with institutions shrink, as a study conducted in Iowa reports (Reina, Maldonado, and Lohman 2013). In destinations with large immigrant or co-ethnic communities, however, the presence of social support services geared to immigrants is believed to mitigate these negative effects (Dreby and Schmalzbauer 2013; Menjívar, Abrego, and Schmalzbauer 2016). Thus, the destination context is pivotal in shaping whether and how enforcement strategies like Secure Communities affect immigrant women's social networks. Our study examines Latinas' social isolation in four traditional destinations. Under current enforcement practices, these

destinations seem to align with newer destinations in their effects on Latina immigrants' social isolation.

Thus, focusing on Secure Communities' effects on Latina immigrants is especially timely, given the Trump administration's focus on detention, deportation, and family separation, all of which affect immigrant women, especially Latinas, in specific ways. Our understanding of these effects will help shed light on the enhanced interior enforcement's long-term effects on Latina/o communities across the United States.

## Data and Methods

A random digit dialing sample focused on heavily Latina/o census tracts was conducted by Lake Research Partners in November and December 2012. Respondents included approximately 500 Latina/os from each of four large metropolitan counties: Cook (Chicago), Harris (Houston), Los Angeles (Los Angeles), and Maricopa (Phoenix) ( $n = 2004$ ).<sup>7</sup> Almost 80 percent of interviews were conducted in Spanish (for more information on the methodology, see Menjivar et al. 2018). 53 percent of respondents were women, and 43 percent had children under the age of 18 (see Table 1). Respondents' age ranged from 18 to 92, more than 40 percent did not have a high school education, and about half (52.6 percent) were employed full- or part-time. Sixteen percent of respondents self-reported not being in the United States legally, and approximately 60 percent reported having friends, relatives, coworkers, or household members in the United States without legal status. A little over one-quarter of respondents were born in the United States, and 74 percent reported that their family originated from Mexico.

## Coding of Key Variables in the Analysis

The survey included approximately 35 questions that measured perceptions of immigration enforcement by local agencies, as well as respondents' experiences with local law enforcement. Eleven questions examined specific feelings about local law enforcement officials becoming more involved with immigration enforcement. This material included questions about whether increased involvement led to feeling safer or less safe, being afraid to leave the house, being more likely to report a crime or contact law enforcement officers, and feeling more isolated. Experiences with law enforcement included 11 questions such as whether the respondent or their friends or family members in the past year had been stopped by police officers or other law enforcement officials, asked for their immigration papers, threatened with deportation, and insulted or verbally disrespected. A question also asked whether in the past two years any close friends or family members had been deported.

For our analysis, we created several dummy variables including Female, Phoenix, Spanish (whether the interview was conducted in Spanish), Born in United States, Mexico (Mexican origin), Children (having children), Deported (close friend or family in past two years), Undocumented (whether the interviewee reported being undocumented), and Employed. We

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<sup>7</sup>Respondents were screened to ensure that they identified as Latina/o or Hispanic. Note that the original data set and frequencies reported using the original data set by Theodore and Habans (2016) were weighted so that there were 501 respondents from each county. We use unweighted data for the reported frequencies and all subsequent analyses.

chose Phoenix as a dummy variable because of its well-known history of strict, indeed unconstitutional, immigration enforcement. Age remained a ratio variable, and Education was coded by education level completed. Perceptions of increased immigration enforcement by local law enforcement were coded 1–3 (Involvement: less involved = 1, no change = 2, more involved = 3). Summative scales were created for experiences with law enforcement officials (variable name Detained: range 0–11) and knowing someone who is undocumented in the United States (relative, friend, coworker, and household member; variable name UndocContacts: range 0–4).

The three variables for the Social Isolation scale, which is the dependent variable in our models, are (1) I feel afraid to leave my house because local law enforcement officials are more involved in immigration enforcement, (2) I feel more isolated because local law enforcement officials are more involved in immigration enforcement, and (3) since local law enforcement has become involved in immigration enforcement, I have begun to feel like I am under more suspicion. Responses were strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree. The resulting summative scale ranged from 3 to 12 and fit together well (Cronbach's alpha = .791).

## Results

Almost all respondents reported an increase in involvement by local law enforcement (44 percent) or no change (50 percent). Note, the “no change” response is ambiguous, as this question asked whether there was a change in local law enforcement involvement in the past two years while the 287(g) program and other initiatives had been active for years before that and had been vigorously enforced. 30 percent of respondents reported that at least one close friend or family member had been deported in the past two years. On average, respondents reported 2.2 incidents with a police officer or other law enforcement official in their city in the last year for themselves, a family member, or a friend. Over 20 percent reported at least five such incidents. A large segment of the sample felt increased social isolation: 39 percent of all respondents reported being afraid to leave the house because local law enforcement was involved in immigration enforcement activities. Forty-four percent felt more isolated, and 39 percent felt under more suspicion. These percentages are almost identical for women and men.

Bivariate correlations (available from the first author) showed that gender is not correlated with Social Isolation ( $r = .008$ ,  $p = .749$ ). Recall that earlier studies (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjívar 2000, 2002) showed that women are able to build social networks that reduce social isolation. However, intensified immigration enforcement seems to depress any advantage that women had in building community through networks and, thus, reducing social isolation. Having children under age 18 was significantly related to Social Isolation ( $r = .141$ ,  $p = .000$ ), with those having children being significantly more likely to feel socially isolated. This finding differs from previous research showing that having children increased immigrant women's social networks by necessitating that they leave the house to interact with social institutions like schools and medical facilities (see Dreby 2015; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjívar 2000, 2002; Terriquez 2012). Our results might be explained by the increased fear of spending time in public spaces, given the risk of deportation or detention,

particularly for mothers with children under 18. These women may experience increased fear of separation from their children, leading to fewer social interactions and increased social isolation, as supported by recent research (see Lin et al. 2015).

A number of other variables were significantly related to Social Isolation. As expected, positively related variables include Spanish, Mexico, UndocContacts, Undocumented, Phoenix, Employed, and Detained. Negatively related variables were Age, Education, and BornUS.

Next, we ran *t*-tests and ANOVA to compare means with Social Isolation among the four cities (see Table 2). The ANOVA results showed that the mean scores on Social Isolation were significantly different among the four cities and that they ordered as we would expect, with respondents in Phoenix reporting the most Social Isolation followed by Houston, Los Angeles, and Chicago. *t*-tests between gender and Social Isolation in each city showed that there were no significant differences between women and men on Social Isolation within each city. These insignificant results reinforce our finding that gender no longer has an effect on social isolation, but the finding that there are no significant differences in cities with less immigration enforcement is surprising, since we expected that women might show lower social isolation than men in cities with less immigration enforcement, such as Chicago and Los Angeles. This result might be explained by increased anti-immigrant rhetoric, even in cities with less immigration enforcement and in national discourse. It could also be that even though these cities have comparatively less stringent immigration enforcement, at least by local law enforcement, the increased *federal* immigration enforcement, especially as reported extensively through Spanish-language media (Menjívar 2016), could be enough to reduce the differences between women and men on social isolation.

OLS regression results with all variables in the equation showed that personal experiences with immigration enforcement (being undocumented, knowing undocumented people, being detained, and knowing folks who were deported) are so strongly related to Social Isolation that they basically overwhelm most other relationships. Therefore, we first report a reduced model with only the eight demographic variables (see Table 3). In general, the model does not explain Social Isolation well ( $R^2 = .098$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Houston, Phoenix, Spanish, Age (negative relationship), BornUS (negative), and Children are related to more Social Isolation. Those who were born in the United States (and, thus, were US citizens), those who lived in Phoenix, and those who conducted their interview in Spanish had the highest correlations with Social Isolation. Having children remains positively related to Social Isolation. Again, instead of children leading to more opportunities to engage with social institutions and spend time in public spaces, our results indicate that having children leads to more Social Isolation. It appears that the fear of deportation or detention (and, thus, separation from the children) leads individuals, both women and men, to feel more isolated when they have children.

In a second OLS model (see Table 4), we added the immigration status variables (Undocumented and UndocContacts) and the perception of local law enforcement involvement (Involvement). This model explains more variance in Social Isolation ( $R^2 = .189$ ,  $p = .000$ ), as all three new variables are strongly significant in the expected directions.

Being undocumented, having personal connections with those who are undocumented, and perceptions of increased law enforcement involvement are all related to more Social Isolation in our sample. Phoenix, Houston, Spanish, and BornUS remain significant, but having children is no longer significant. Therefore, undocumented status, connections with undocumented individuals, and perceptions of law enforcement involvement have greater impact on Social Isolation than having children. Females and Males are still not significantly different from each other in feelings of social isolation, meaning that women's networks may have lost their strength and are now undermined.

Our third OLS model (see Table 5), adding the two personal experience variables, Detained and Deported (see Table 4), explains much more variance in Social Isolation ( $R^2 = .260$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Phoenix, Houston, Spanish, and BornUS continue to be significantly related to Social Isolation. Those living in Phoenix and Houston, those conducting the interview in Spanish, and those not born in the United States reported feeling more socially isolated. Female and Children remain insignificant.

The specific social context also makes a significant difference in feelings of Social Isolation, even after controlling for a number of variables, including the personal variables of being detained or knowing someone who was deported. Having Undocumented Contacts was no longer significantly related to social isolation, but being undocumented and being or knowing someone who was detained and deported were. As would be expected, direct or vicarious experiences with being detained or deported are strongly related to Social Isolation.

Though not significant in the first two models, Education and Employment are now significantly and negatively related to Social Isolation. It seems Education and Employment have a mitigating effect on social isolation that appears when Detained and Deported are accounted for. Those with less education or not employed become more socially isolated when they or their friends or family members have been detained or deported.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This article has examined the impact of anti-immigrant policy and immigration enforcement on social isolation among Latinas/os. Though the data were collected in 2012, they have special relevance today, as the Trump administration has resurrected programs previously shelved due to racial profiling concerns, reinstated the Secure Communities program, and significantly expanded interior enforcement. In addition, local law enforcement agencies, like those in Maricopa County, Arizona, continue their racial profiling of Latinas/os in routine policing (CNA 2019). In this climate, the consequences of subnational enforcement regimes have become critical to current legal and policy debates. Our analysis shows that varying enforcement regimes in four contexts have significant effects on feelings of social isolation among Latina immigrants but that there is no significant difference between women and men. Latina/o immigrants today appear to be equally unconnected as men to social institutions.

A large percentage of the over 2,000 Latina/o survey respondents in the traditional destinations we examined—Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and Phoenix—experienced interactions with law enforcement officials and knew friends or family members who had been deported in the two years before the survey. As hypothesized, a number of respondents reported increased social isolation, including 39 percent who were afraid to leave the house because local law enforcement was involved in immigration enforcement activities. Surprisingly, there was no significant difference between women and men on these individual social isolation variables.

In documenting these trends, our article demonstrates the gender homogenizing effects that current enforcement practices have on Latina/o immigrants in the United States. Whereas immigrant women, by virtue of gendered expectations, have historically been anchors of community building, this role may be changing. In each model, women and men were equally likely to feel socially isolated. In our first reduced model, having children had an effect on social isolation, but not in the direction that the literature suggests (see Menjívar 2002, Valdez, Padilla, and Valentine 2013, and Schmalzbauer 2014, who show that immigrant women with children are more likely to be socially active than their male counterparts). Here, having children led to more social isolation, suggesting that those persons with children were even more likely to fear immigration enforcement and thus increased their social isolation (fear of leaving the house, feeling isolated, and feeling under suspicion). Further regression results showed that of the three Social Isolation variables, having children was most significant in fear of leaving the house.

In all models, Phoenix was the most significant city, which attests to the climate of fear that has plagued the Phoenix Latina/o community. Houston is also significant in all three models, but the relationship with social isolation is not quite as strong as in Phoenix. It is important to note that these relationships are maintained even when controlling for undocumented status, the legal status of friends and family members, perceptions of increased law enforcement, being detained, and a number of other variables. This finding from four major US cities points to the destination context as critical to immigrants' perceptions of safety and well-being (see Dreby and Schmalzbauer 2013; Schmalzbauer 2014). Some cities, like Phoenix and Houston, can erode immigrant well-being by undermining social networks and increasing social isolation, making them even less welcoming for Latina/o immigrants.

As expected, being born in the United States and, thus, presumably being a US citizen also led to decreased social isolation, while having conducted the interview in Spanish led to increased social isolation. Finally, social isolation was most related to being undocumented, to knowing someone who had been deported, or to having more interactions with law enforcement officials in the past year. Despite some political rhetoric, especially in the Obama administration, that Secure Communities, its successor, the PEP, and other similar programs like 287(g) were not intended to target noncriminal undocumented immigrants, our findings indicate that a large number of Latinas/os, including documented and undocumented immigrants not involved in criminal enterprises, had frequent contact with law enforcement officials, leading them to avoid public spaces thus leading them to feel more socially isolated.

Our results echo Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro (2011), who found that Latina/o immigrants responded to local immigration enforcement and social exclusion by withdrawing from their community. This increase in social isolation is especially troubling as it has critical socioeconomic impacts and is linked to poor health outcomes and reduced access to health care (Livingston et al. 2008; Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro 2011; Negi 2013; Martinez et al. 2015), especially in immigrant-hostile contexts like Phoenix (Szkupinski Quiroga, Medina, and Glick 2014). A nationwide survey of educators (Ee and Gandara 2020) parallels our findings; 45% of educators had observed decreased parental involvement among immigrant children resulting from increased immigration enforcement. This decrease may result from the Latina immigrants' social isolation we examined here, especially that women are usually the parent involved in children's schools. Furthermore, for Latina immigrants in particular, social isolation can lead to decreased help-seeking behaviors, thus increasing impunity for domestic violence and putting women at increased risk (Reina, Maldonado, and Lohman 2013; Engelbrecht 2018).

Our findings highlight the breadth and depth of the contemporary US immigrant enforcement regime's effects, pointing to key intersections by race, ethnicity, and gender. The enforcement climate today, by increasing immigrants' "deportability" (de Genova 2004), affects the lives of Latina/o immigrants and their communities so profoundly that it is altering long-standing social dynamics, to the detriment of Latina immigrants. An aspect of settlement that gave these women a social advantage and perhaps even a sense of belonging was their ability to forge networks beyond the family to interact with institutions, create community, and advocate for their rights and those of their families (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Martinez 2010; Terriquez 2012). This ability also conferred on Latina immigrants social status because of the social capital they could generate in their communities through their public activities (Menjívar 2002). Latina immigrants' active social ties even served to offset some of their disadvantages in other spheres of life, such as their unequal position in the labor market, lower levels of human capital, and asymmetries in the household (Bathum and Baumann 2007). In today's enforcement climate, however, these social advantages have changed dramatically, especially for Latinas and those who are undocumented or know someone who is out of status. Without improvements in other areas of their lives (e.g., employment, education, etc.), Latina immigrant women's lives can be further marginalized and gender inequalities exacerbated in the face of expanded enforcement programs such as Secure Communities.

While our study focused on four large US cities, similar patterns of internal immigration enforcement are taking place around the globe. The United Kingdom (Aliverti 2016; Bowling and Westera 2018), Malta (Mainwaring 2012), the Netherlands (van der Woude, van der Leun, and Nijland, 2014), and other countries are engaging not only in the control of their physical borders but also in strategies that strengthen and expand interior enforcement (Menjívar 2014b). In a generalized context of securitization and border expansion, immigrant-receiving countries around the world have turned to enforcement and punitive measures as strategies of immigration control (Menjívar 2014b). Our analysis is, therefore, relevant beyond the specifics of our empirical case. Our findings that increased enforcement leads to increased social isolation and disconnection from social institutions,

especially among those traditionally involved in actively building social ties, should be a wider warning of the possible deleterious effects of such enforcement strategies.

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**Table 1.**

Means and Standard Deviations for Variables in the Analysis.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>
Chicago	.247	.431	2004
Los Angeles	.242	.428	2004
Houston	.251	.434	2004
Phoenix	.261	.439	2004
Female	.567	.496	2004
Employed	.513	.500	2004
Undocumented	.165	.372	1894
UndocContacts	1.278	1.340	2004
Mexico	.740	.440	2004
Children	.440	.496	1944
BornUS	.28	.449	1956
Spanish	.730	.442	2004
Age	46.76	16.049	1961
Education	2.22	1.384	1910
Involvement	1.62	.591	1804
Deported	.300	.458	1952
Detained	2.216	3.035	2004
Social Isolation	6.788	2.918	1769

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**Table 2.**

Comparison of Means between Cities and Gender with Social Isolation.

<i>t</i> -Tests						
City	Means with Social Isolation			<i>t</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>p</i>
	All	Men	Women			
Chicago	6.41	6.43	6.39	.153	425	.878
Los Angeles	6.67	6.65	6.70	-.176	424	.861
Houston	6.84	7.02	6.69	1.16	439	.246
Phoenix	7.18	6.94	7.36	-.159	481	.132

  

ANOVA between Four Cities and Social Isolation					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	143.151	3	47.717	5.647	.001
Within Groups	14912.931	1765	8.449		

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**Table 3.**

Reduced OLS Model with Social Isolation (Demographic Variables Only).

Variable	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Los Angeles	.162	.024	.812	.417
Houston	.434	.064	2.180	.029
Phoenix	.920	.140	4.716	.000
Female	.019	.003	.135	.893
Employed	.100	.017	.648	.517
Spanish	.629	.096	3.246	.001
Age	-.012	-.066	-2.577	.010
Education	-.044	-.021	-.792	.428
BornUS	-1.308	-.202	-6.781	.000
Children	.346	.059	2.280	.023
Intercept	6.780		17.419	.000

$R^2 = .098$

$p = .000$

$N = 1656$

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**Table 4.**

Second OLS Model with Social Isolation (Involvement, Undocumented Status of Self, and Contacts Added).

Variable	<i>b</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Los Angeles	.148	.022	.735	.463
Houston	.463	.069	2.329	.020
Phoenix	.773	.118	3.945	.000
Female	.083	.014	.577	.564
Employed	-.256	-.043	-1.633	.103
Spanish	.428	.065	2.190	.029
Age	-.007	-.035	-1.379	.168
Education	-.107	-.051	-1.939	.053
BornUS	-.716	-.112	-3.614	.000
Children	.040	.007	.261	.794
Involvement	.698	.140	5.799	.000
Undocumented	1.169	.151	5.482	.000
UndocContacts	.379	.177	6.273	.000
Intercept	4.570		9.979	.000

$R^2 = .189$

$p = .000$

$N = 1501$

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**Table 5.**

Full OLS Model with Social Isolation (Detained and Deported Added).

Variable	<i>b</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Los Angeles	.237	.034	1.219	.223
Houston	.399	.059	2.077	.038
Phoenix	.587	.090	3.101	.002
Female	.137	.023	.992	.321
Employed	-.297	-.050	-1.972	.049
Spanish	.437	.067	2.321	.020
Age	-.004	-.021	-.832	.406
Education	-.179	-.085	-3.350	.001
BornUS	-.661	-.103	-3.468	.001
Children	.057	.010	.392	.695
Undocumented	1.094	.141	5.342	.000
UndocContacts	.092	.043	1.444	.149
Involvement	.387	.078	3.265	.001
Detained	.238	.258	9.394	.000
Deported	.662	.105	3.898	.000
Intercept	4.990		11.306	.000

$R^2 = .260$

$p = .000$

$N = 1492$

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