

# **Immigration Raids and 911 Calls in Hispanic Communities**

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## **Abstract**

Immigration raids may exacerbate legal cynicism from targeted communities towards the police, leading to a decline in calls for service and concerning public safety implications. This study analyzes how six immigration raids that each detained over 100 individuals in 2017 and 2018 influenced calling behavior patterns by the Hispanic communities of Los Angeles. Calling rates decreased significantly during immigration raids, but these observed decreases did not match regressions controlling for day of week, season, and lagged dependent values. The raids appear to affect calls for service due to predictable daily variation and the periodicity of the raids themselves. Within the study's limited scope, immigration raids do not clearly affect calling behavior, but the effect of aggressive, punitive immigration enforcement may yet be reflected in long term community relationships with the police.

Keywords: Immigration, race, police, immigration enforcement, legal cynicism, community trust, calls for service, 911 calls.

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## **Introduction**

On July 21, 2016, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) concluded a four-day-long raid in Los Angeles, California that detained 112 immigrants. It was just one of many raids conducted in the summer of 2016 by then President Barack Obama's ICE, "focused on [deporting hundreds of Central American] mothers and children who have already been told to leave the United States." (Edwards 2016) Months later, Donald Trump was elected as president after a campaign fueled by anti-immigrant rhetoric, which has defined his administration's policy.

His presidency has inspired fear in immigrant communities, particularly Hispanic communities targeted and vilified throughout his campaign and term. This fear has spread to relationships with government at large. This study analyzes how immigration raids influence community trust in local law enforcement. I examine six immigration raids that happened in Los Angeles in 2017 and 2018, which each detained over 100 individuals, and patterns of calls for service before, during, and after each raid. I hypothesize that during an immigration raid, calls for service by Hispanic communities will decrease.

## **Background**

Community trust in local law enforcement depends on treatment from law enforcement, and it is particularly weak in poor communities of color due to racialized, uneven treatment from the police and institutions that historically have failed to serve their communities. Race is consistently found to be one of the most significant predictors of attitudes towards the police and the criminal justice system at large. (Zhao et al. 2011) In 2016, the Los Angeles Police

Department released a report titled *Prevention and Elimination of Biased Policing* after it was revealed that the department did not uphold any of the 97 allegations of racial profiling made in the first six months of that year. The report found that 58.9 percent of Black residents and 38.3 percent of Hispanic residents think that the police does not treat all races and ethnicities fairly, while only 31.1 percent of white residents think so. (Beck 2016)

Legal cynicism is the belief that the law is “illegitimate, unresponsive, and ill equipped to ensure public safety.” (Kirk and Papachristos 2011) It is particularly prevalent in communities of color and informs their attitudes towards the police, but it does not necessarily influence actions involving the police and crime reporting because the police virtually monopolize law enforcement by the state and crime control. Bobo and Thomspson (2006) found that while 90 percent of Black survey respondents would call the police and file a report after a home burglary, only 35 percent expected to be taken seriously—nearly half as much as white respondents. Similarly, Hagan et al. (2018) found that while 55 percent of Black respondents believed that the police does not treat all people fairly, Black communities with high legal cynicism still had high rates of calling the police to report property crime, such as theft or burglary. These calling and crime reporting patterns have persisted for over a decade in the surveyed communities. Although race predicts attitudes towards the police, it does not necessarily predict how people call and report crime to the police.

However, highly prominent events of misconduct by law enforcement that confirm a legal cynic’s beliefs and lived experiences of racialized, uneven treatment do profoundly affect how they call and report crime thereafter. Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk (2016) studied how nationally salient incidents of police brutality influence crime reporting in Milwaukee. They

found that after the widely publicized beating of Frank Jude, a Black man, by several white police officers, calls for service throughout Milwaukee sharply decreased. Black communities accounted for 56 percent of the 22,000 lost calls, and their calling and crime reporting patterns remained below normal for over a year. Other studies have found that major events Events like the beating of Frank Jude are focal points for the legal cynicism of communities of color. They highlight how racist and unequal treatment from law enforcement can be; injustice against an individual is not isolated but injustice against a community.

Much like their citizen equivalents, immigrant communities, particularly those of color, have tenuous relationships with law enforcement and the state. Intersecting immigrant identities amplify attitudes of legal cynicism and exacerbate tensions with the police. From the Naturalization Act of 1790 to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, from *Korematsu v. United States* (1944) to *United States v. Martinez-Fuerte* (1976) to *Trump v. Hawaii* (2018), American legal institutions have consistently permitted and perpetuated inequality based on citizenship status. Legal socialization is the process whereby people develop attitudes towards, beliefs about, and relationships with the law. (Piquero et al. 2016) It is a process that can be stilted and difficult for immigrants: one that results in either faith and trust in the law or, more often than not, disillusionment and fear.

John Locke establishes in *Two Treatises of Government* that in a social contract between individuals and the state, individuals forgo certain liberties for the state to respect, protect, and realize their natural rights. Miller (2016) argues that if a state asserts the law on all of its residents, then it similarly must protect the rights of all residents, legal or not. While the state

permits residency, it cannot violate the rights of any individuals that it allows to reside within it. Carens (2013) argues that to meaningfully realize these rights, immigration enforcement must be separate from state apparatuses that enable residents to realize their rights. As Parekh and Davis (2018) articulated, “[i]f individuals are structurally prevented from claiming their basic human rights, they are effectively denied them; it is not merely that immigration enforcement *deters* people from claiming their human rights.”

When a government such as the United States blurs the distinction between immigration enforcement and its other apparatuses, particularly the police, those who are not citizens can be legally socialized to lack faith and trust in the law. Ryo (2017) found that immigrant detainees had strong legal cynicism stemming from even prior to their detention. They viewed the legal system as punitive, legal rules as inscrutable, and legal outcomes as arbitrary. These attitudes diffuse into how a community interacts with immigration enforcement, as well as how an individual interacts with the rest of the government. (Weaver and Lerman 2010) The threat of immigration enforcement and deportation colors immigrant interactions with other law enforcement, even if a community commits to being a sanctuary city but particularly when the distinction is hardly present.

As immigration enforcement becomes increasingly punitive and strict, it may instead undermine public safety by exacerbating legal cynicism in immigrant communities. (Kirk et al. 2012) Rodrigues et al. (2018) found that from 2016 to 2017, law enforcement respondents experienced a 15 percent decrease in immigrant victims’ willingness to cooperate. Judges, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors all reported that this decrease was particularly high for cases such as child abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault, where a

perpetrator may hold citizenship status over a victim. When an individual does not report a crime or otherwise utilize the police due to fear of repercussion from a legal system supposedly meant to protect them, their own attitude of legal cynicism is reinforced—as well as community distrust in the law at large.

## **Study Design**

This study analyzes every call for service made from the residents of Los Angeles to the Los Angeles Police Department in 2017 and 2018. Rather than using anecdotes, media portrayals, surveys, and predictions about future behavior, I use calls for service as a proxy for community trust in law enforcement and examine how calls change before, during, and after an immigration raid. When a resident calls 911, they actively seek some interaction with the police, whether because they actually trust the police or because the police has successfully monopolized law enforcement and there are no other options. Calling 911 shows cooperation with and reliance on the American legal system, and it is foundational for public safety. (Reiss 1992)

I consider three questions: (1) Do immigration raids affect calls for service made by Los Angeles residents at large? (2) How do calls change in Hispanic communities compared to non-Hispanic ones? Do they increase, decrease, or not change? I would like to note that American immigrants are neither monolithic nor singularly Hispanic. However, Hispanic people are the largest population group detained during raids and are particularly targeted by policy and rhetoric. (3) How long do immigration raids affect patterns in calls for service?

## **Immigration and Customs Enforcement Raids**

I identified six ICE raids in 2017 and 2018 in which over 100 individuals were arrested. A raid that occurred from February 6, 2017 to February 10, 2017 detained 161. A raid that occurred from May 21, 2017 to May 25, 2017 detained 188. A raid that occurred from September 24, 2017 to September 27, 2017 detained 101. A raid that occurred from February 11, 2018 to February 15, 2018 detained 212. A raid that occurred from June 10, 2018 to June 12, 2018 detained 162. A raid that occurred from September 23, 2018 to September 25, 2018 detained 150.

Neither ICE nor any part of the larger Trump administration announced these raids prior to their actual occurrence, though they shared such news afterwards. However, in 2019, the president pivoted from precedent when he announced nationwide, indiscriminate raids over a month in advance through a Tweet. (Trump, 2019) Notably, former ICE acting director John Sandweg warned that doing so would lastingly harm relationships with immigrant communities: “We need to be able to have a trusting relationship with people in the immigrant communities so they point us out to where the bad guys are... Obviously you eliminate that when you talk about these kind of raids targeting non-criminal family populations.” (Patterson and Romero 2019)

## **Data and Methods**

Los Angeles is the state of California’s largest city, with an estimated 2018 population of 10,105,518—70.8 percent are white, 9.0 percent are Black, 15.4 percent are Asian, and 4.6 percent are Hispanic. The state of California’s residents are 72.1 percent white, 6.5 percent Black, 15.3 percent Asian, and 3.3 percent Hispanic. The Department of Homeland Security

estimates that over seven percent of the state's population is undocumented, almost 25 percent of the nation's total undocumented population. ("Population Estimates," 2018) Los Angeles provides data on calls for service made to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) from January 2010 to present on its open data portal, which additionally has information about reporting district, dispatch date, area, and call code and type. I analyze the 2,163,780 calls made in 2017 and 2018.

### *Reporting Districts Racial and Ethnic Population Data*

These calls were made from LAPD's 1,135 self-demarcated reporting districts. I estimated these reporting districts' racial and ethnic demographics by testing two procedures: filtering by good overlap and assuming geographic uniformity. Both procedures started by geographically intersecting census tracts by reporting districts.

To filter by good overlap, I first dropped any intersection less than 10 percent. I then summed the populations of all census tracts that intersected with one reporting district. I then generated a weighted population variable that divided an individual census tract's total population by total reporting district population, as well as an overlap variable that divided percent intersection by weighted population. I kept all overlaps greater than 80 percent, and the resulting total population became a reporting district's racial and ethnic population data.

To assume geographic uniformity, I multiplied percent intersection across each census tract's population data and summed the weighted populations of all census tracts that intersected with one reporting district. The summed population became a reporting district's racial and ethnic population data.



I estimated LAPD’s reporting districts’ population data using the assuming geographic uniformity procedure because it nearly matched the filtering by good overlap procedure but allowed analysis of all reporting districts instead of 704.

**Table 1. Filter by Good Overlap**

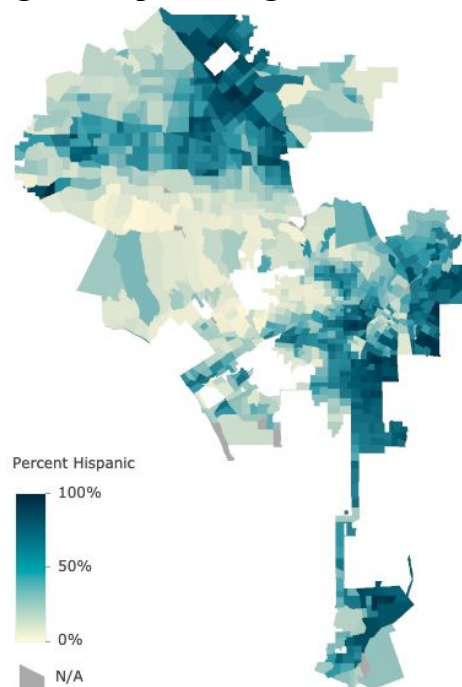
	Frequency	Percent
<b>Low</b>	288	40.91
<b>Middle</b>	218	30.97
<b>High</b>	198	27.12
<b>Total</b>	704	100.00

**Table 2. Assume Geographic Uniformity**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Low</b>	486	42.82
<b>Middle</b>	358	31.54
<b>High</b>	291	25.64
<b>Total</b>	1,135	100.00

After estimating the reporting districts’ population data, I separated them based on percent of Hispanic residents. California is 39.3 percent Hispanic, but Los Angeles is almost 50 percent Hispanic. I designated reporting districts with less than 39.3 percent Hispanic residents as “Low,” those with more than 70 percent as “High,” and all in between as “Middle.”

**Figure 1. Los Angeles Map Showing Percent of Hispanic Residents**



*Dependent Variables.* I examine the total daily number of calls for service at the reporting district level.

*Explanatory Variables.* I test the influence of immigration raids on calls for service. To do so, I generated binary variables for each raid and coded each variable equal to 1 for observations during the raid and equal to 0 for observations before and after the raid.

*Control Variables.* To account for daily and seasonal variation in crime and crime reporting, I control for the day of the week as well as the season. Crime spikes towards the end of the week and slumps in the beginning. Similarly, crime also spikes in the summer and slumps in the winter. To account for calling behavior the day before an observation, I control for the lagged dependent value.

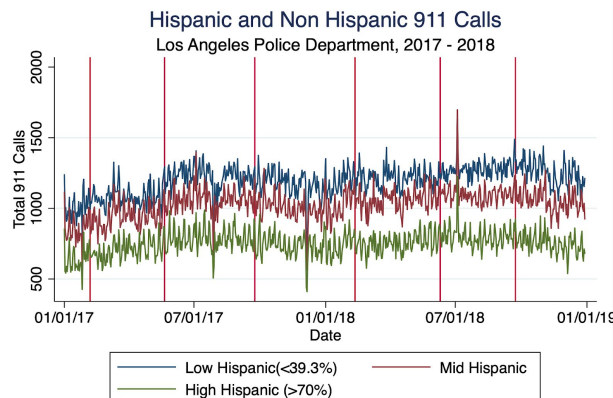
*Methods.* To analyze how each of the six identified immigration raids changes calling behavior patterns, I run a series of regressions: (1) calls for service and just immigration raids, (2) calls for service, immigration raids, and controls for day of week and season, and (3) calls for service, immigration raids, and controls for day of week, season, and the lagged dependent value.

## **Results**

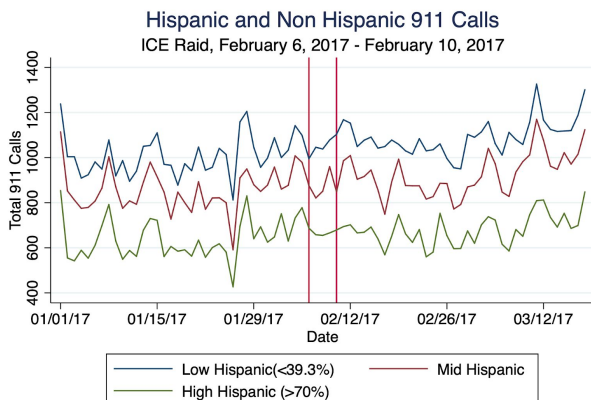
I first graphed every call for service made by low, middle, and high Hispanic communities in 2017 and 2018, then graphed all calls for service made by those communities one month before and after each raid. Visual inspection of each raid-specific figure finds that,

during some raids, calls declined regardless of percent of Hispanic residents (see Figures 4 and 5), while during some raids, only calls made by high Hispanic communities declined (see Figures 3, 6, 7, and 8).

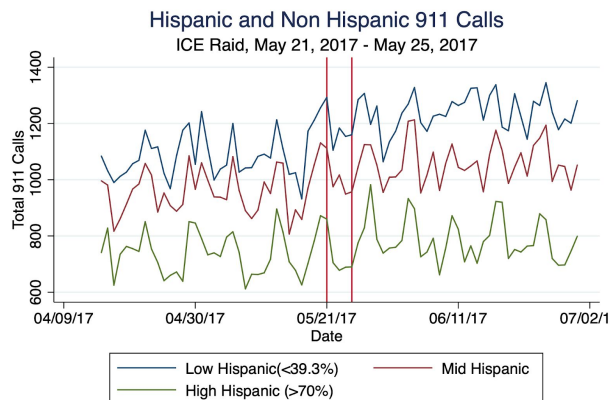
**Figure 2. Calls for Service Made in 2017 and 2018**



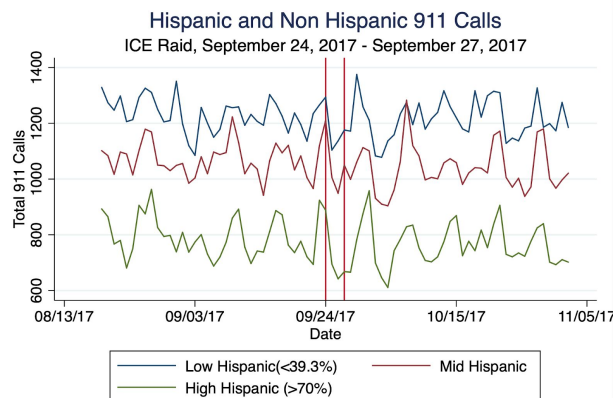
**Figure 3. Calls for Service Made Before and After ICE Raid in February 2017**



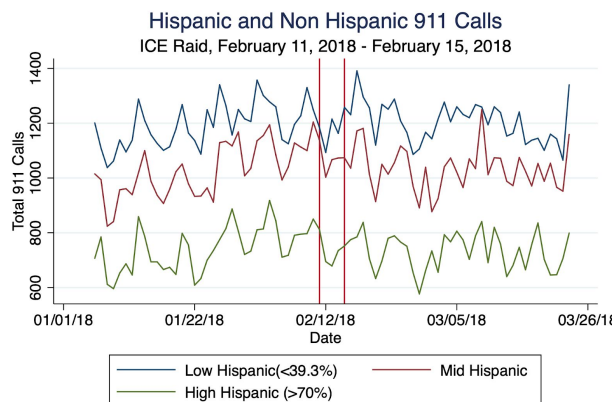
**Figure 4. Calls for Service Made Before and After ICE Raid in May 2017**



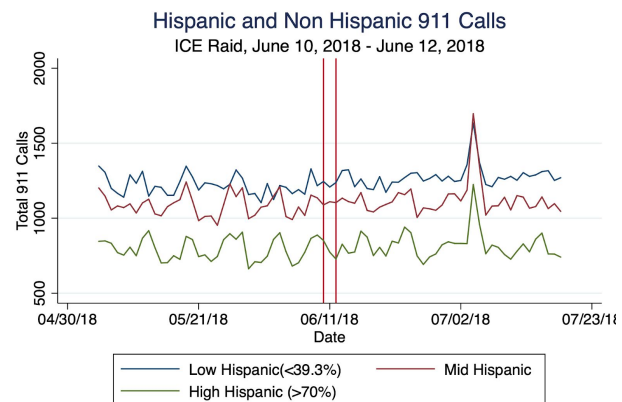
**Figure 5. Calls for Service Made Before and After ICE Raid in September 2017**



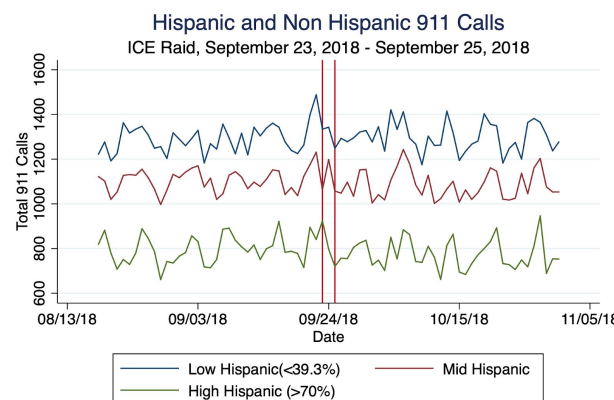
**Figure 6. Calls for Service Made Before and After ICE Raid in February 2018**



**Figure 7. Calls for Service Made Before and After ICE Raid in June 2018**



**Figure 8. Calls for Service Made Before and After ICE Raid in September 2018**



The day following the start of a raid, calls made by high Hispanic communities decreased an average of 13.548 percent, while those made by low Hispanic communities decreased an average of 5.68 percent and those made by middle Hispanic communities decreased an average of 5.460 percent. Calls made by high Hispanic communities decreased an additional average of 4.970 percent two days after, while those made by low Hispanic communities increased an additional average of 1.748 percent and those made by middle Hispanic communities decreased an additional average of 0.635 percent. Visual inspection and these decreases suggest that immigration raids affect calls for service made particularly by high Hispanic communities during the raid.

Table 3 shows the results of the first set of regressions, which estimates the effect of immigration raids on calls for service. Although the results show that immigration raids have a generally depressing effect on calls for service, they are not statistically significant and their goodness of fit is low.

**Table 3. Regressions Estimating the Effect of Immigration Raids on Calls for Service**

		Coefficient (SE)	p-value	Adjusted R-squared
<b>Low</b>	February 6, 2017	-142.614 (48.864)	0.004	0.102
	May 21, 2017	-14.534 (49.147)	0.768	-0.0013
	September 24, 2017	-15.972 (54.910)	0.771	-0.0013
	February 11, 2018	-11.111 (49.148)	0.821	-0.0013
	June 10, 2018	36.851 (63.350)	0.561	-0.0009
	September 23, 2018	115.173 (63.221)	0.069	0.0032
<b>Middle</b>	February 6, 2017	-158.212 (47.123)	0.001	0.0139
	May 21, 2017	-26.508 (47.477)	0.577	-0.0009
	September 24, 2017	25.816 (53.047)	0.627	-0.0011
	February 11, 2018	42.970 (47.460)	0.366	-0.0002
	June 10, 2018	72.975 (61.161)	0.233	0.0006
	September 23, 2018	78.000 (61.152)	0.203	0.0009
<b>High</b>	February 6, 2017	-81.784 (38.716)	0.035	0.0047
	May 21, 2017	-26.001 (38.823)	0.503	-0.0008
	September 24, 2017	-27.122 (43.377)	0.532	-0.0008
	February 11, 2018	-15.731 (38.830)	0.686	-0.0012
	June 10, 2018	34.687 (50.049)	0.490	-0.0007
	September 23, 2018	63.707 (50.010)	0.203	0.0009

Table 4 shows the results of the second set of regressions, which estimates the effect of immigration raids on calls for service with controls for day of week and season. Like the first set of regressions, the results show that immigration raids have a depressing effect on calls for service, primarily those made by high Hispanic communities, but they are not statistically significant. However, their goodness of fit has increased.

**Table 4. Regressions with Controls for Day of Week and Season Estimating the Effect of Immigration Raids on Calls for Service**

		Coefficient (SE)	p-value	Adjusted R-squared
<b>Low</b>	February 6, 2017	-61.277 (42.973)	0.154	0.2514
	May 21, 2017	19.640 (42.995)	0.648	0.2495
	September 24, 2017	-28.308 (47.972)	0.555	0.2497
	February 11, 2018	76.648 (42.939)	0.075	0.2526
	June 10, 2018	70.433 (55.222)	0.203	0.2510
	September 23, 2018	103.513 (55.155)	0.061	0.2530
<b>Middle</b>	February 6, 2017	-71.576 (40.144)	0.075	0.3016
	May 21, 2017	-14.379 (40.198)	0.721	0.2986
	September 24, 2017	34.025 (44.842)	0.448	0.2991
	February 11, 2018	123.856 (39.965)	0.002	0.3078
	June 10, 2018	78.404 (51.603)	0.129	0.3007
	September 23, 2018	82.488 (51.599)	0.110	0.3010
<b>High</b>	February 6, 2017	-3.316 (29.551)	0.911	0.4322
	May 21, 2017	-21.897 (29.518)	0.458	0.4327
	September 24, 2017	-15.157 (32.946)	0.646	0.4324
	February 11, 2018	49.190 (29.494)	0.096	0.4344
	June 10, 2018	25.792 (37.952)	0.497	0.4326
	September 23, 2018	67.388 (37.884)	0.076	0.4347

Table 5 shows the results of the third set of regressions, which estimates the effect of immigration raids on calls for service with controls for day of week, season, and lagged dependent values. Like the first and second sets of regressions, the results show that immigration raids have a depressing effect on calls for service, primarily those made by high Hispanic communities, but they are not statistically significant. However, their goodness of fit has increased—some regression results’ goodness of fit has almost doubled.

**Table 5. Regressions with Controls for Day of Week, Season, and Lagged Dependent Values Estimating the Effect of Immigration Raids on Calls for Service**

		Coefficient (SE)	p-value	Adjusted R-squared
<b>Low</b>	February 6, 2017	-24.250 (34.110)	0.477	0.5302
	May 21, 2017	2.244 (34.058)	0.947	0.5371
	September 24, 2017	-14.613 (37.995)	0.701	0.5300
	February 11, 2018	40.322 (34.092)	0.237	0.5308
	June 10, 2018	47.556 (43.753)	0.277	0.5307
	September 23, 2018	7.305 (44.030)	0.868	0.5299
<b>Middle</b>	February 6, 2017	-38.822 (32.620)	0.234	0.5403
	May 21, 2017	-15.720 (32.577)	0.630	0.5396
	September 24, 2017	18.576 (36.360)	0.610	0.5396
	February 11, 2018	48.882 (32.801)	0.137	0.5409
	June 10, 2018	47.775 (41.882)	0.254	0.5403
	September 23, 2018	22.939 (42.000)	0.585	0.5396
<b>High</b>	February 6, 2017	-3.669 (26.685)	0.891	0.5368
	May 21, 2017	-20.399 (26.653)	0.444	0.5372
	September 24, 2017	-24.522 (29.748)	0.410	0.5372
	February 11, 2018	29.056 (26.715)	0.277	0.5376
	June 10, 2018	8.368 (34.307)	0.807	0.5368
	September 23, 2018	38.910 (34.328)	0.257	0.5376

## Discussion

Highly prominent events that are perceived to or actually harm a community “have observed profound but short-lived effects [on attitudes or behavior], characterized by a sharp escalation and an equally sharp de-escalation.” (Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk 2016) These events lead to a temporal clustering of changed attitude or behavior such that the change diminishes over time. (King and Sutton 2013) However, the six identified immigration raids are not these highly prominent events. The underlying dynamic of daily and seasonal variation in crime and crime reporting influences calls for service more than immigration raids themselves.

The results suggest that immigrant communities, despite the intensified presence of immigration enforcement, still call 911 and rely on the police for crime control and public safety. Regardless of attitude—whether they actually trust law enforcement and Los Angeles’ commitment to being a sanctuary city or whether their options are limited, their behavior does not change and they still call and seek interaction with the police. Conversely, ICE is simply strategically successful when not publicizing its raids. An individual may not be aware of law enforcement’s actions, even when such actions can directly affect them or their communities. Moreover, an average raid detains about 100 or 200 people, while Los Angeles has nearly five million Hispanic residents. An unannounced immigration raid which detains a slim fraction of the population may not be prominent enough to warrant a significant change in behavior.

That the regression results neither match visual inspection nor observed decreases illuminates the periodicity of immigration raids. Each of the six immigration raids appeared to affect calls for service because they started on Sunday or Monday—when the underlying dynamic of daily variation already causes calls for service to slump. Visually, calling behavior



oscillates randomly, but it cycles through similar spikes and slumps every week. Therefore, immigration raids that start at the beginning of the week, like all major ones in Los Angeles in 2017 and 2018, seem to depress calls for service made by high Hispanic communities by over 10 percent. In addition to starting at the beginning of the week, immigration raids occur every three to four months and last about three to four days. There is a regularity to the act of detaining hundreds based on their citizenship status, and it is not unique to the Trump administration.

Although the Trump administration diverges from past administrations by threatening immigration raids to generate political noise and force policy, it is quite similar in practice. Indeed, after the raid in February 2017, ICE Los Angeles Field Office Director David Marin said that all but five of the 161 arrests would have been enforcement priorities under the Obama administration. (Flores 2017) Similarly, Department of Homeland Security acting press secretary Gillian Christensen said that “[t]he focus of these targeted enforcement operations is consistent with the routine, targeted arrests carried out by ICE’s Fugitive Operations Teams on a daily basis.” (Robbins and Dickerson 2017) While the president Tweeted the day after the raid that “[t]he crackdown on illegal criminals is merely the keeping of my campaign promise,” his administration actually followed a policy of aggressive immigration enforcement that started with President George W. Bush and has not meaningfully halted since. (Trump 2017)

Immigration has always been a fraught, political hot button. Immigrant communities are undoubtedly vulnerable under the Trump administration, but they have been increasingly targeted since the Bush administration took office in 2001. This study captures calls for service made and any changes in calling behavior patterns since the Trump administration started in 2017, but it lacks capturing calls for service over a longer window of punitive immigration

policy—one covered by the data collected and made publicly available by LAPD since 2000, when the department entered a consent decree with the Department of Justice.

Although the analysis thus far does not confirm the hypothesis that calls for service by Hispanic communities decrease during an immigration raid, further analysis may yield finer, more specific results. The analysis currently aggregates all Hispanic communities and all call types. Over a quarter of LAPD's reporting districts are over 70 percent Hispanic, though these communities are not monolithic. While calls made by Hispanic communities that passed that threshold did not significantly decrease during immigration raids, disaggregating Hispanic communities by neighborhoods where raids occurred may suggest otherwise. Similarly, parsing by call types may suggest otherwise, given how other studies find that immigrant victims are particularly unwilling to cooperate in cases where a perpetrator can leverage citizenship status. Los Angeles' Hispanic communities do not call the police less during immigration raids in general, but individual neighborhoods may report certain crimes less during immigration raids.

This study analyzes immigration raids in only one community—a community that has committed to not cooperate with and has sought to distinguish itself from federal immigration enforcement. Behavior when interacting with police does not necessarily reflect attitude to law enforcement at large. As both immigration activists and immigration enforcers have warned, new immigration policy may have long term effects that have not been fully realized yet. Over a time period longer than the two analyzed years, such policy may infuse a community with an ethos of legal cynicism. If the theoretical purpose of law enforcement is indeed protecting and serving, it fails when a community fears repercussion from the institution more than whatever it is meant to protect against.

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