



The discourse of deservingness

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The discourse of deservingness: Racialized framing during rumored ICE raids

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Abstract

On February 12–14th, 2017, there were rumors of an ICE raid in the small East Texas city of Hometown. Reports that ICE was present circulated on social media platforms and radio stations in the area. Consequently, the Latinx community had high anxiety and fear of deportation and looked to the Spanish speaking radio DJs for information and advice. In this paper, we argue that heightened threats of deportation can accentuate divisions among the Latinx community based on fallacies regarding criminality and immigration. The authors utilized a collection of qualitative data to review the racialized framing that occurs during rumored ICE raids. A discourse of deservingness based on the notion of the “good” versus “bad” immigrant was internalized by vulnerable immigrants to alleviate stress about deportation.

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Racialization of Latinos, immigration, deportation, ICE raid rumors, Latinos and technology

Introduction

Deportation rumors have long existed before the establishment of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE). While anxiety and fear of deportation remain a central feature of the immigration experience, America's most vulnerable communities must now navigate with changes in prioritized and increased deportation levels, federal and state collaboration for mass deportation, and political conversations about immigrant brown bodies. While President Obama was known as the 'Deporter-in-Chief' for the unrivaled number of deportations that occurred during his two terms, President Trump's policy changes and budget proposals focus on making anyone unlawfully present in the country a priority for deportation. President Trump's 2020 Budget allocated \$51.7 billion for the Department of Homeland Security, a 7.9% increase from 2019, for a border wall, 2,800 additional officers, and an expansion of immigration detention centers (White House, 2019). These actions have heightened widespread fear of deportation in immigrant communities and have also strained solidarity among undocumented people. Undocumented immigrants of Latinx¹ origin have to renegotiate daily life in order to avoid deportation and may adopt racialized framing of immigrants to alleviate fears of removal. Many communities depend on Spanish-language radio stations and digital media for information as they make decisions about heightened threats.

We argue that, in the process of dealing with fear and anxiety during a rumored ICE raid, Latinx people of various legal status used frames to justify that they *deserved to stay* by noting that it was others who *deserved to be deported*. Such *discourses of deservedness* rely on racialized framing of deportation to alleviate individual stress and anxiety during periods of heightened threats of deportation. These discourses reproduce larger, racialized tropes of Latinx criminality and highlight divisions in the community. The Latinx community in this study is encompassed by people of legal status (such as lawful permanent residents (LPR)) and those of traditionally understood liminal status, defined by the ambiguous and temporary nature of their immigration standing (such as Temporary Protective Status, work visas, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) (Gonzales, 2015). Although LPRs in previous decades experienced more security in their status, Menjivar and Abrego (2012) have argued that even LPRs experience liminal status as continuous executive policy changes have increased their vulnerability for deportation. Within this deportation regime, removal proceedings can lead to lasting and devastating consequences for immigrant communities of color, particularly due their criminalization (De Genova and Peutz, 2010). The threat of

deportation has forced mixed-status immigrant families, consisting of both citizen and undocumented members, to find ways to cope with fear, anxiety, and uncertainty.

The *discourse of deservedness* yields an understanding of racial formation as it intersects with the current deportation regime, the policies and practices that lead to mass deportation, and deportability (De Genova and Peutz, 2010; Flores-Yeffal et al., 2017; Omi and Winant, 2015). In the following sections, we discuss the racialization and criminalization of Latinx immigrants in the United States. First, we provide a brief summary of events and political context.

The context of hometown

Around 11 million unauthorized immigrants live in the US, with two-thirds being of Mexican and Central American origin (Passel and Cohn, 2016). Over 92% of deportees are Latinx, of which 85% are males of lower socioeconomic status (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013). Texas has the second largest number of immigrants in the country with border regions and large cities serving as traditional destinations for Latinx immigrants. Hometown² is a relatively new destination in Texas because of the surge of labor demands requiring the need for cheaper labor. Metropolitan areas like Houston and San Antonio are no longer the only spaces experiencing an increase of Latinx immigrants because of changes in immigrant networks (Massey, 1990).

Further, Hometown carries a reputation of anti-immigrant and anti-Black rhetoric that has systemically kept out minorities from the city through their policies and public attitudes. The intentional residential segregation of Hometown, similar to other cities and suburban areas, is consistent with a history of exclusion that creates unequal distribution of social and economic resources across racial groups (Massey and Denton, 1993; Peterson and Krivo, 1999; Light and Thomas, 2019). Despite the more diverse arrivals, Hometown represents a highly conservative Texas county, as 58.5% voted for Donald Trump in 2016 and 55.9% voted for him again in 2020.

According to the Center for Migration Studies (2015) and Census (United States Census Bureau, 2017), 13% of over 200,000 people living in the Hometown area are foreign-born, of which 45% are unauthorized. Southeastern University is the primary employer in Hometown. Its impressive growth in enrollment from 2000 to 2016 drives a local boom in real estate, construction, hospitality services, retail, landscaping, educational and healthcare services – industries which employ both authorized and unauthorized immigrant workers (Passel and Cohn, 2016). A nearby location, where most immigrants live, is 41% White and 38% Latinx. Hometown, on the other hand, is 67% White and 15% Latinx. The growth of the Latinx community is noted in many local political discussions and the vast differences within these neighboring towns reflect spatial segregation.

The rumored ICE presence

In February 2017, reports that ICE was present in Hometown circulated on Spanish social media platforms and radio stations. What followed was a week of frenzied posts, debates, and calls to the local Spanish radio station about these reports. Although these reports were unsubstantiated, they created real fear and anxiety among this community that has lasting effects. Participants in the 27,000 member La Pulga (Flea Market) Facebook page took part in lively discussions about the life of immigrants in Hometown, Texas. Given that ICE agents conducted targeted apprehensions across the state in February, the heightening a sense of uncertainty was warranted. Coincidentally, February 16th was the national boycott 'A Day Without an Immigrant' and the conversations regarding ICE sightings, immigration policy, worker rights, and political attitudes spiraled online and on the radio as people in the Latinx community looked for advice and support. The La Pulga Facebook page posts reflected the community's anxiety and fear about whether ICE was in town during those days and what business they were conducting.

Since various calls and emails flooded Hometown's local news stations about alleged raids at construction sites and other locations, an ICE spokesperson released a statement indicating that they would not be conducting raids in the county. In retrospect, 153 undocumented immigrants were arrested by ICE in South and Central Texas in February and March, although there were no arrests in Hometown to our knowledge (Staff, 2017).

In March 2017, Hometown's County Sheriff declined participation in a program known as 287(g) that would deputize local law enforcement as agents of ICE.³ The opposition to the program was not due to alliance with the immigrant community, but rather unreasonable expenses associated with participation such as costs associated with training, salary, and benefits. Hometown's law enforcement is frequently visited by ICE and immigrants with deportation holds are picked up every Wednesday. Despite Hometown's County Sheriff's stance on improving communication with crime victims regardless of immigration status, they voluntarily cooperated with ICE according to previous statements made by the Sheriff's office.

While Hometown's ICE presence is only one example of how the heightened threat of deportation can create chaos in marginalized immigrant communities, immigration and law enforcement policy interact in ways that lead to the hyper-precaritization of everyday life for Brown and Black immigrants. Hyper-precaritization, a tool we use to frame this heightened threat of deportation, is both an economic and existential state of anxiety that results from the interlocking labor exploitation and hyper-surveillance of working-class, foreign-born people of color (Schierup et al., 2015). Immigrants are racialized as undocumented, live in over-policed poor communities of color, and are often relegated to working in low-wage industries, many of which are conducted in plain view of law and immigration enforcement (like day laboring, landscaping, and construction).

Hyper-precaritization can lead to economic difficulties and a heightened sense of deportability given employers' racialization and threats of deportation as labor discipline that has been highlighted in much immigration research (Golash-Boza, 2015; Menjivar and Abrego, 2012; Provine and Doty, 2011; Schierup et al., 2015).

At the same time, residential segregation leads to concentrated pockets of mixed-status and unauthorized families living in areas where there is heavier police presence, and greater possibility of being stopped for driving without a license. Driving to school or work can produce anxiety and uncertainty (Provine and Doty, 2011). In this way, the social inclusion of hyper-precaritized immigrants are dependent on their labor utility in the local economy. Immigrants are vulnerable to a continuous threat of removal when they no longer appear to provide economic incentive (Golash-Boza, 2015; Schierup et al., 2015). While we do not focus our analysis on the labor demands of Hometown, we include them to clarify the context of deportation and contextualize the consequences of hyper-precaritization of Latinx immigrants during deportation threats.

Since the 2016 presidential elections, immigrants are more acutely aware of their deportability as they maneuver daily tasks, especially as executive orders consistently change immigration policies and priority levels. The fear of deportation is not new, yet fear has increased during the last four years. The Trump Administration's aggressively racist and xenophobic approach to immigration has resulted in heightened numbers of deportations and a shift in popular perceptions of immigration. This results in anti-immigrant rhetoric that has led to a nation-wide conversation about citizenship and immigration. Fear of deportation subverts routines, like driving kids to school or going to the supermarket, because they can result in contact with local law enforcement and may end in deportation. Importantly, even if local deportation rates are relatively low, the pervasive presence of federal and local surveillance of everyday life results in a heightened sense of deportability. In response to hyper-precaritization, the Latinx immigrant community in Hometown may accept racialized definitions of deportation that define categories for those who deserve to stay and those who have earned deportation.

Application of racial formation

We frame our discussion of immigration through a critical race theory lens to understand deportation's connection to a racialization of anti-immigrant ideology. This racialized ideology promotes a political agenda to expel a specific type of immigrant. Particularly useful to our analysis, Omi and Winant (2015) interpret race to be the epicenter of the American experience – an element situated in political and institutional structures. Racial meaning is consistently transformed by political struggle that is rooted in the American legal system and connected to the dynamics of immigration enforcement. The internalization of racialized 'common sense' narratives (i.e. racial stereotypes, understandings, images, and inclinations to act) of the dominant social group by Latinx people reveals how

processes of racialization can lead to acceptance of symbolic violence (Feagin and Cobas, 2008). While Feagin and Cobas' analysis focused on assimilation of Latinx Americans, we argue that immigration enforcement and the heightened threat of deportation can lead to divisions within Latinx immigrant communities due to acceptance of the 'undeserving criminal immigrant' narrative. The discussion regarding the racialization of Latinx immigrants cannot be understood outside the context of their systemic criminalization.

We position our work at the intersections of several theoretical viewpoints and bodies of literature: racial formation, immigration, hyper-precaritization, and deportation as they are all vital to understanding how (il)legality is understood and contested (Hernández et al., 2018; Schierup et al., 2015). The heightened enforcement of immigration coincides with growing insecurities surrounding the shift from predominantly European to predominantly Latin American and Asian immigrants (Massey et al., 2016). Provine and Doty (2011) further argue that contemporary policies regarding unauthorized immigration reinforce racialized anxieties through the criminalization of immigrants of color. This criminalization results from frameworks of illegality that undergird our policing systems, beyond those within the Department of Homeland Security (Armenta and Alvarez, 2017). The construction of illegality, regardless of actual documentation, is produced by the laws of federal and state agencies but is also reinforced by the general US public (Enriquez et al., 2019; Flores and Schachter, 2018). As we will explain, these constructions of legality further shape Latinx immigrants' understanding of the threat of deportation.

We use Omi and Winant's terminology of a 'racial project' to frame contemporary immigration enforcement practices as rooted in racist stereotypes about non-White immigrants. A racial project is "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines" (Omi and Winant, 2015: 125). We argue that the narrative surrounding deportation that frames Latinx immigrants as criminals and as disposable cheap labor is a racial project. This racial project remains rooted in ongoing racial formations in society that produce criminalized perceptions of deportation (De Genova, 2004; Golash-Boza, 2015; Gonzales, 2015; Hernández et al., 2018; Provine and Doty, 2011). These racialized frameworks, including those criminalized notions of deportation, are not only adopted and normalized by the dominant society, but they also trickle down to the very group they target.

The effect of ICE street raids, whether legitimate or fabricated, inflict fear in Latinx communities. Street raids are less common than home raids (Golash-Boza, 2015). However, the aftermath of street raids leads to rumors that circulate in communities long after they take place. The increased threat of deportation leads to distrust in local authorities because there is uncertainty about who will report unauthorized immigrants to ICE. This is evidenced by governmental programs such as Secure Communities⁴ that partner with local law enforcement agencies to check the immigration status of detained individuals (ICE, 2018). Secure

Communities operates in Hometown with ICE picking up persons they have deemed removable through an immigration hold every Wednesday. Hometown's county has helped ICE apprehensions grow from 21.3% in 2014 to 77.8% in 2015 (TRAC Immigration, 2016).

Misconceptions of deportability affect Latinx communities of various immigration statuses because these programs may unintentionally adopt racialized beliefs that connect criminality with immigration removal orders, thus leading to more encounters with local police that result in deportation. Heightened threats of deportation create greater distance between Latinx communities and the general population; making Latinx immigrants even more susceptible to abuse and mistreatment. This also creates divisions within Latinx communities that strains with solidarity and weakens efforts of resistance. The illusion of a panethnic collective experience alienates those who are mistreated and criminalized at higher rates (i.e. Afro-Latinx, Indigenous Central Mexican, and mestizos of darker complexion). While illegality is both socially and legally constructed, Gómez Cervantes (2019) argues that racialization of Latinx immigrants as a homogeneous population normalizes non-White Latinx and Indigenous bodies as undocumented. White Latinx people or Mestizos with lighter skin tones may employ Whiteness as a resource during heighten threats of deportation (Gómez Cervantes, 2019).

While we know that ICE raids are detrimental for those being targeted, we focus on the *unreliability of information* during rumored ICE raids that often creates community-wide panic. This unreliability of information encourages discourse on belonging, heightening existing divisions within the Latinx immigrant community. The resulting narrative *creates a dichotomy of immigrants who are worthy of staying and those deserving of removal*. This uncertainty of legal status can result in real consequences pertaining to the social organization and mental health of vulnerable immigrants of color (Garcia, 2017; Lopez et al., 2017).

The convergence of deportation and criminal law

Fong Yue Ting v. United States (1893) first established deportation as a civil, non-punishment. As such, there are no guaranteed protections of Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination, Sixth Amendment right to counsel, and only a limited Fourth Amendment prohibition against unreasonable searches and seizures (García Hernández, 2015). Deportation allows for what Hernandez (2005) labels 'undue process' because of the numerous ways in which deportation structures have regressively denied basic human rights to noncitizens and their inability to advocate for justice. Although immigration proceedings are civil cases, the criminal justice system has increasingly become central to government's processes of handling immigration. Hence, the number of individuals deported with criminal convictions on their records has increased (Cantor et al., 2015; García Hernández, 2015). Deportation, in our modern context, has become more synonymous with criminality than ever before and creates the illusion that undocumented people are criminals, specifically those of darker complexion (Gómez Cervantes, 2019).

Menjivar and Abrego (2012) assert that the collision of immigration and criminal law has led to current practices of legal violence, a form of symbolic and structural violence, normalizing the criminalization of immigrants. The normalization of legal violence, in turn, helps frame injustices against immigrants as legitimate; limiting avenues of advocacy for undocumented people. De Genova and Peutz (2010) argue that deportation is situated within a socio-political regime that reproduces and reinforces narratives about nationalism, race, sovereignty, citizenship, and class. Divisions within a deportation regime are inevitable among non-citizens and citizens. However, while their analysis of the legal status of immigrants stresses the systemic connections between immigration policy and criminal law, it is also important to focus on how undocumented people find ways to cope with deportability. Due to federal and state acts of legal violence, the rationalization and justification of systemic mistreatment against Latinx immigrants are associated with the Latino Threat Narrative. Though based on negative stereotypes, this narrative is reproduced across media platforms, including news media outlets; one of the major providers of information (Chávez, 2008; Mohamed and Farris, 2020).

The 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act expanded the crimes that qualify for possible basis of removal and increased penalties (i.e. misdemeanors were changed to felonies) for non-citizens. Moreover, enhanced penalties are retroactive so that misdemeanors committed as a juvenile could make a noncitizen deportable decades later (Golash-Boza, 2015). Criminalization of immigrants, as evident in deportation orders issued for ‘aggravated felonies,’ depicts both documented and undocumented immigrants as worthy of deportation by the government and general media. Deportation orders associated with aggravated felonies are misleading as they often include charges that were dropped or are misdemeanors (*Guerrero-Perez v INS* 2001). According to García Hernández:

Arrests for immigration crimes doubled from 1994 to 1998, doubled again from 1998 to 2004, and yet again from 2004 to 2008. Indeed, arrests for immigration crimes grew faster than any other type of federal crime from 2006 to 2010. This trend shows no sign of abating. In 2010 a full 46 percent of individuals arrested and booked by United States Marshals Service for suspicion of any federal crime found themselves in the predicament because of an immigration offense. This had a profound impact on federal criminal law practice. (García Hernández, 2015: 11)

This intersection of criminal and immigration law demonstrate how deportation has also permeated law enforcement power at both state and local levels.

Immigration-related laws can vary among states but the most damaging provisions are common across the US and focus on limiting and criminalizing the behavior of day-to-day activities that impact survival of immigrants, such as driving without a license. We explore a possible consequence to both federal immigration policies and state enforcement power which operates to regulate the movement of Latinx immigrants. Specifically, Latinx communities are not

immune to the internalization of criminalized notions of deportation and may accept these problematic and racialized terms to ease anxiety about their own deportability. The racialized notions of the ‘illegal immigrant’ must be noted in these discussions among Latinx immigrants as they are not immune to the internalized racism. The Latino Threat Narrative is pervasive in the US and in their countries of origin. We argue that racialized divisions within Latinx immigrant communities may be exacerbated by heightened threats of deportations such as ICE raids *because* of uncertainty that results from unclarity and misinformation in information networks.

Methods

Data for this paper are derived from several rich qualitative sources. First, 16 hours of audio recordings of the Spanish radio shows were obtained, with relevant discussions transcribed and coded for themes that focused on issues of immigration and deportation.⁵ Second, given Spanish radio’s pivotal role in the discussion, we interviewed radio DJs. Five out of the six radio DJs (80%) were male that we interviewed. All DJs ranged in age from mid-30s to 70s and participated in the study to discuss their part in that week’s shows and their views on the role of media in the community broadly. The radio station, which is part of a larger radio conglomerate with multiple local stations, has been in operation since the mid-1970s and was, at the time, the only Spanish radio station. Residents of Hometown and the surrounding area can hear this radio station in majority Latinx public spaces like stores and restaurants. Covering parts of multiple surrounding counties, it is the most sought-after source of information and entertainment in Spanish for 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants⁶ in the area. The radio shows referenced by our respondents covered the rumored ICE threat during working hours and was extended into a later segment due to the increase of calls and questions. While the station has a digital presence, the on-air discussions did not move to the online platform during the rumored raid.

Third, to gain a better understanding of the local Latinx community, reactions to ICE raid rumors, and the role of media, we also interviewed five female journalists working at other news outlets who were between 30 and 50 years of age.⁷

Fourth, we focused on the La Pulga (flea market in Spanish) Facebook page since it was the other main locus of community discussions about ICE and the national ‘A Day Without an Immigrant’ boycott. In addition to obtaining IRB approval to use discussions posted on the moderated La Pulga site, we also obtained permission from the moderators and individuals who participated in those interactions. One of the authors, who had been a member of La Pulga and participated in discussions about ICE in February 2017, reached out through La Pulga to obtain interviews. Only six individuals responded. This low level of participation highlights a response to an October 2017 announcement that all immigrants’ social media accounts will be monitored (Friedland, 2017). Many people are reluctant to use social media and to discuss their strategies against

deportability. Facebook interviewees ranged in age from 20 to 60, with half being male-identified and half being female-identified.

In order to complement the interviews of the online participants, the research team sought to obtain a comparable public space to the La Pulga Facebook page and radio. As the fifth source of data, we interviewed 14 individuals who frequented a weekly flea market popular with Latinx people in Hometown. To participate in the interviews at the flea market, individuals had to be Latinx and make use of either the local Spanish radio or La Pulga. The 12 female identified and two male identified participants were in a similar age range as the La Pulga Facebook interviewees, between their early 20s and 60s. From interviewees' own statements, we believe that the participants varied in legal status, including US citizens, legal permanent residents, and unauthorized immigrants. It is more difficult to know the legal status of the people who called into the radio shows or posted on La Pulga, unless they revealed their status to the research team. The multiplicity of sources of our qualitative data allowed for a deeper and more comprehensive ethnographic exploration of the implications of ICE raid rumors on the Latinx community.

Throughout this project we found that members of the immigrant community seemed resistant to participate in the study due to the conservative nature of Hometown's politics and the anti-immigrant discourse. Hence, special consideration was taken during the research process to protect individuals' identities. During our research design stage, we considered the highly sensitive nature of deportability and the real fears that our participants expressed. Hence, we did not ask participants' legal status and pseudonyms are used.⁸

In the end, a total of 29 interviews were analyzed for the code *discourse of deservedness*. Data were analyzed using discourse analysis with Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software. Interviews were conducted in Spanish, translated by the bilingual authors, and coded systematically by all four authors for issues of ICE, deportability, trustworthiness, and media. This analysis software allowed us to create an initial code scheme with more ease. We used a structurally contextualized critical discourse analysis, that 'connects discourse and structure in the analysis phase' (Moore, 2014: 67). In the following section, we demonstrate how ICE raids heighten the need for reliable information across media platforms due to polarity in the Latinx community that can result from increased risk of deportation.

Discourse of deservedness

Roberto Gonzales' (2015) work on undocumented youth yields important findings regarding the stratification of immigrants based on merit and good character. The contemporary framing of immigration in news media has created a dichotomy between undocumented immigrants *deserving to stay* and those *deserving to be deported*. García Hernández (2015) argues that the term 'immigrant' holds a specific legal definition that is commonly used to describe noncitizens; however, popular understandings of immigrants also include permanent residents and those who

were naturalized. The complexity of deportation is centered on the potentially removable or those in the process of removal that can extend to those with legal authority to reside in the United States. Since deportability is frequently associated with previous and often ambiguous ‘convictions’ or criminal proceedings, the stratification of immigrants is identified through the language of the criminal justice system. The process of deportation and immigration enforcement itself is a racialized process. This stratification, as mentioned earlier, intersects with racialized frames of Latinx people.

As we have previously stated, this framing is a direct consequence of previous and ongoing immigration policies in the US. Although the heightened threat of deportation has exacerbated social divisions, in analyzing the use of radio and digital media among Hometown’s Latinx immigrant community, we find that participants used a discourse of deservedness to explain away fear or anxiety regarding the presence of ICE in their spaces. This discourse of deservedness is rooted in racialized and criminalized notions of Latinx immigration. This coping mechanism was used to alleviate panic but highlights how Latinx immigrants can also participate in their racialized criminalization without purposeful intention. Although the threat of deportation may lead to Latinx people feeling hunted or forced into the margins, this fear does not fully represent the everyday reality of deportation after immediate reactions of ICE (Garcia, 2017). We found that respondents were not completely sure what made immigrants deportable given recent changes in deportation priority levels, thus adopting definitions that have circulated online and on the radio.

Debates about why ICE was in town – and who deserved to be picked up – intensified divisions within the Latinx community and was evident by how people discussed immigration issues on the radio and alerted one another on Facebook. We argue that discourse on social media and the radio creates racialized notions of deportability and facilitates the marginalization of immigrants who do not fall within the frame of deservedness. Even while some respondents argued that digital media are less reliable than radio, they also had conversations centered around traits of deportability. Even Spanish Radio DJs, framed as leaders of the community by most of our participants, inadvertently perpetuate frameworks that allowed for racialized notions of deportability.

According to the 2019 Immigration Statistics, the Fiscal Year of 2018 yielded a 13% increase of ICE removals, with Mexican nationals accounting for 141,045 out of the 256,085 immigrants removed in 2018 (ICE, 2018). The top eight countries with the highest rates of deportations are all from Latin America, as opposed to lower rates of deportation from non-ethnic White countries of origin. These statistics demonstrate that deportation is something that many Latinx, specifically Mexican and Central American immigrants, experience – thus racializing the process as an act affecting Latinx communities. The role of ICE remains mysterious to many Latinx community members, but a centralized fear exists concerning ICE’s power to deport individuals, and many are ready to accept racialized definitions of deportability because of ‘racial common sense’ in ‘dominant society’s deep

assumptions' (Feagin and Cobas, 2008: 40). This fear was also intensified during the drafting of the Texas Senate Bill 4 that would extend power to local law enforcement to act as federal immigration enforcement.⁹

The Spanish-speaking radio DJs were seen as better sources of information during Hometown's deportation threat because of their history with the community and access to resources. Many respondents echoed feeling that what is said on the radio must be true because they are sources of news. However, conversations on the show often reproduced inequality surrounding *deservedness*. Radio DJs stated that they verified information through the local police station, immigration lawyers, and other important members of the community. While the radio might be the best source of information for many in this study, information shared did not evade racialized definitions of deportability.

Some radio DJs perpetuated racialized definitions of deportability that were underscored by their relationships with local law enforcement. Radio DJ Daniel, a highly regarded man in the community, in his 70s and who has been on the radio for 50 years, stated the following after he said that 15 to 17 callers mentioned the rumored ICE raids in Hometown:

We [live] under the terror, the frustration, the anger, but we cannot act scared, and we cannot live our life with the power of fear. When we are controlled by fear, we commit errors, we drive nervously, we look nervously over our shoulder thinking that everyone is out to get us. We have to, under these circumstances act like [nothing is wrong]. All we [at the radio station] know is that they are looking for people with deportation orders. And we know that [ICE] is here for deportation reasons. There is no confirmation of people, innocent immigrants, taken in by ICE.

While his statements were made with the intention of alleviating the stress and anxiety of callers and listeners fearful of deportation, these statements were centered on racialized definitions of who *deserves to stay* (innocent people) and *who deserves to be deported* (by contrast, criminals). Daniel fails to recognize that illegality is felt and experienced differently for immigrants of precarious status. His statement, while intending to alleviate the fears of Latinx immigrants, fails to see how criminalization is centered on frameworks of illegality that work within our policing system, especially those in Hometown (Armenta and Alvarez, 2017). Radio DJs worked hard during those segments to calm the community in panic due to ICE rumors but also fail to see how colorism and racialization of Latinx people can impact vulnerable immigrant groups differently.

Another radio DJ, Jessica, spoke on air against fear and tried to alleviate anxiety by also using criminality as a precursor to deportation. She stated to her callers:

Normally, they take 4 or 5 people that are undocumented immigrants with problems with the law. Here, [in Hometown], they have increased that number, and the only advice [the radio program] has is to know your rights and don't break the law.

Jessica, similar to Daniel, unintentionally created, not only criminalized notions of illegality, but also racialized beliefs about immigration removal orders by choosing to use racially neutral language about criminality and deportation. Jessica legitimizes deportation as a criminalized act done by those who fail to follow the law, consequently ignoring the expansion of priority levels of deportation to include non-criminal offenses, the issues of system racism in our policing system, and the privilege of lighter Mestizos and White Latinx to experience less harassment in immigration enforcement (Gómez Cervantes, 2019).

Due to the high volume of callers who were fearful of being picked up by ICE, radio DJs emphasized criminality as the basis of deportation because it is the most frequently used imagery and topic in news reports (Mohamed and Farris, 2020). Only one radio DJ in our sample stated that there was only a possible chance that innocent and law-abiding immigrants could be picked up for ‘being at the wrong place at the right time’. The following responses demonstrate the racialized definitions of deportation made by respondents we interviewed. When asked if either had ever heard that people were scared of going out due to ICE, Linda and Carla stated in turn:

Like I have said, [ICE] is only doing their job. . . They only come for people that [have done something], so they have [files on] them. On the very radio [station], they say it. We have nothing to fear if we don’t do anything [wrong]. Later it comes on the radio that if you drive, don’t drink. If they stop you with alcohol while driving, there you get into trouble. Well, I have seen that [the government] says that they are only doing their job, and they advise you so that you live well under the norms or rules in which we are in.

. . . I don’t know, I don’t know, but they are helping. It’s what I was saying that there are some immigrants that come here [that] can commit mistakes and others [do] not. And [the ones that commit mistakes] even get mad when. . . they are detained. But they committed mistakes.

Linda’s discourse of deservedness focused on avoiding criminality, consequently directing blame on behavior rather than on other social forces. The use of ‘they’ is not only used as a racialized marker of othering but also reveals how immigrants internalize criminalized notions of illegality. Carla was less certain about the qualifications for deportation, but also adopted the discourse of deservedness, claiming delinquency initiated contact with ICE and argued that it was unlawful mistakes that warranted arrest. Individuals who engaged in criminal activity, according to this framing, *deserved to be deported* because they failed to adhere to laws and norms of their community.

Racialization of La raza and illegality

Issues of race were brought up 50 times in our sample, however, over 50% of the responses analyzed for racial issues acknowledged divisions within Latinx

communities. Responses about racial issues in Hometown reflected feeling uncomfortable or uneasy in White spaces and being seen as foreign by people they classified as ‘American citizens’. Others highlighted the racism they had felt from the Black community; however, many of these comments were veiled in anti-Black rhetoric. For example, Bradley, a long-time resident of Hometown made the following statement regarding the differences within the work ethic of Latinx and Black people:

...the other people [African Americans] do not buy their children anything [at the store] and the kids cry, and cry and they don’t buy them anything. I don’t know why. It’s because they don’t work like us [Latinx people].

Bradley’s anti-Black statement reflects the racialization framework of the United States but also the anti-Black sentiments that exist within Latin America. The use of ‘they’ to reference Black individuals communicates an insider/outsider dynamic (Merriam et al., 2001). Statements such as the one made above also highlight how Latinx people evoke frameworks of erasure of Afro-Latinx people. Bradley does not acknowledge that some Latinx people are also Black and that Afro-Latinx folks also feel the uncertainty of heightened deportation threats.

Both callers believed deportation only occurred to people labeled as criminals, a direct effect of adopting the criminalization rhetoric surrounding undocumented immigration in news media. By blaming immigrants, this common perception of deportability erases the racialization processes of law enforcement that target male, working-class immigrants of color that often lead to removal proceedings. For example, Linda also explained that traffic stops can lead to deportation, but only if the person has a criminal past. When asked about traffic, Linda stated:

I have heard of people that were detained for a traffic ticket. And they have been deported but they are also people that at the moment have committed some sort of [infraction].

Interviewer: So, it wasn’t just the traffic violations?

Yes, it has been because they already arrested you for something. A brother-in-law has been stopped 3 times and nothing has happened to him, even to this day. So, it is something that until now is something that we try to respect the traffic laws in order to avoid occasions where some risk is necessary.

Linda generalizes the experiences of her brother-in-law to explain how he *deserves to stay* because he has no criminal charges or convictions. By framing traffic stops in this manner, she is able to alleviate some of the stress and anxiety that comes with driving while undocumented. By associating criminality with deportation, Linda and Carla are able to frame individual actions as the impetus of deportation. The dichotomous and simplified framing of deservedness obscures the impact of

socioracial structures that lead to deportation, while also adopting and internalizing racialized notions of criminality.

Linda and Carla exhibit a clear use of racialization as ‘othering’ that is a central feature in racial formation. Omi and Winant (2015) ‘define racialization as the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group. In large-scale, even world-historical setting, racialization can be observed in the foundation and consolidation of the modern world-system’ (p. 111). Deportation debates on a macro-level may seep into the very community that is most impacted by it. In this study, the conflation of criminality and deportation provided a tool to marginalize ‘others’ who ‘commit mistakes’.

Sixty-five percent of our respondents mentioned that ICE only apprehends individuals who have committed a crime. This is unsurprising since President Trump’s Executive Order 13768 claimed ICE would focus on any criminal offenses, including anyone charged with a crime, and without regard for supposed risk level to public safety and/or national security. According to ICE’s 2018 Fiscal Year Report, there was a 30% increase in administrative arrests since 2016 and they made 15,222 more administrative arrests in 2018 than in 2017. Additionally, non-criminal immigration violator arrests increased by nearly 150% in 2017, demonstrating that ICE does deport people who have not broken the law (ICE, 2018). While the racial formation of Latinx immigrants extends beyond criminality, the framing of *deserving to stay* and *deserving to be deported* contributes to active forms of marginalization and helps to frame immigration discourse as a racial project. Latinx people are constructed in the public sphere as a homogenous group and linked to criminal acts. Because the stereotypical image of a criminal is connected to race in the American mediascape, immigrants who are painted as criminals are similarly racialized by these negative media stereotypes. Hence, the image of ICE arrests and pickups at local jailhouses normalizes the criminalization and racialization processes of deportation in these spaces but fails to acknowledge that 48% of deportation proceedings in 2017 were from traffic offenses (ICE, 2018).

Nadia, a participant of the Pulga group, demonstrated the impact of deportation discourse in news media and on Facebook posts when she said:

I was also watching, that they were saying that ICE [was around]. They have always been around but now with more force with the new President. Now they are after people who have criminal offenses, illegal people [sic] – that have problems with the law – heavy things, but if you are [spending time] with them, oh well. [Immigrants] have to be prepared. They have to be listening to the lawyers’ [radio] program on Saturday.

She referenced the expanded threat of deportation but also concluded that undocumented people must be prepared to deal with consequences if they associate with immigrants who engage in criminal activity. The Spanish radio in this study failed to be critical of ICE jailhouse operations as well as mass incarceration policies that

lead certain individuals in the Hometown community to encounter law enforcement more frequently than others. Further, the generalization of Latinx communities also fails to acknowledge the systematic discrimination of darker Latinx people that may face more encounters with the law than lighter-skinned Latinx individuals, regardless of legal status (Gómez Cervantes, 2019; Gonzales, 2015; Menjivar et al., 2018; Rios, 2010).

This framing can alienate individuals within the Latinx community, especially Central Americans, while providing a form of reassurance for others who are undocumented and anxious about ICE by accepting the exclusion of peers they deem ‘criminal’. This is best exemplified when Nadia also stated, ‘It is true that immigration was here, but they came for those who are not doing things right.’ Again, the use of ‘they’ creates distance from immigrants she views as *deserving to stay*. Deportation, understood in the context of a racial project, shapes the discourse of deservedness and intensifies community divisions. It is understood that Latinx people can harbor negative stereotypes of other Latinx members of the community (Feagin and Cobas, 2008), but argue that these racialized stereotypes that connect deportation and criminality can be aggravated during heightened times of deportation. By Latinx people framing themselves as *deserving to stay*, respondents are claiming that others *deserve to be deported*.

The discourse of deservedness is powerful because it creates and exacerbates existing tensions within the Latinx community. On the radio, during a time of particularly heightened threat of deportation, the following conversation was aired during a call-in segment:

I know it came out on the news. My son told me that there were no raids. They are looking for people who owe tickets, who are in trouble with the police, or [skipped] court but are undocumented. While other times they go to places where there are Mexican workers, and they ask for identification. It happened to me about one year ago that they got some of my workers but the brother of a worker of mine, he didn’t have any papers, and they asked him for identification. And they told him, ‘Well you don’t owe anything. You’re clean.’ They didn’t take him. They let him go. Those who have done nothing, have nothing to fear. Because you are illegal [sic], they are not going to take you. They are going to take you if you do something wrong. But simply because you are illegal [sic], they won’t take you.

This story, aired on the radio, demonstrates an important understanding of the frame of the deserving immigrant. Individuals believe that those who follow the law, even though undocumented, are not vulnerable to deportation. This is a dangerous discourse because it may provide a false sense of relief for individuals who do not know they are deportable, despite some individuals having legal permanent residency. While the radio serves as a tool to inform listeners, it also plays into the framing of criminality that alienates others based on their encounters with the criminal justice system. As we discussed earlier, there is active engagement with the dominant narrative of criminality that is reproduced and redistributed on

various forms of media, contributing to a community panic – further othering and alienating particular immigrants in the process.

These divisions within the Latinx community have also become apparent to Hometown's Latinx immigrant residents. Responses about how a criminal past may lead to deportation generalizes deportation and fails to include racialized undertones of deportability. Daniel, a middle-aged man and seven-year resident of Hometown, stated the following regarding divisions within the Latinx community:

I personally have not but I have witnessed. My wife has experienced seeing the very [fellow Latin American] make derogatory comments about people. They don't refer to people but [rather] here is this Salvadoran, the Guatemalan, the Mexican, the drunk, [in] derogatory [ways].

Another community member, Benjamin, a DACA recipient who has been in the Hometown area for 15 years, commented that Latinx immigrant communities are not very unified in the area. As an active member of the Pulga Facebook page, he was online when the rumored ICE raid was circulated on social media. Benjamin explained:

Over there in Mexico, there are also illegals [sic] and many Mexicans treat them [badly]...they step on them. I tell you because I have seen it. I have read and many Mexicans attack Central Americans. We want respect and we don't give it to them in Mexico. On the contrary we attack them, and we should not attack. On the contrary, we should be united. So, we should start [with us], [the] Mexicans, in the United States.

Interviewer: Do you believe that happens here in the US?

Yes, I have seen it and more than anything the very Mexicans attack other Mexicans. That is within the Mexican [community], then the Hondurans attack them. Well I don't because I always respect.

The discourse of deservedness may also be framed within these racialized ethnic divisions that marginalize some members of the Latinx community and may become more apparent during times of heightened threats of deportation. While Mexican nationals made up 57% of ICE removals in 2017, Guatemala (15%), Honduras (10%), and El Salvador (8%) ranked behind Mexico in removals.

Othering is also central to how Latinx people differentiate or distance themselves from one another. While many Latinx people in this study, interviewed by the research team and on the radio, reassured that there were no divisions within the Latinx community, some also used the same othering framing that simplifies deportation as a result of criminal or illegal behavior. Martin, a self-identified

Mexican immigrant with liminal status, echoed a similar sentiment to Johanna when she said in her interview:

I feel like there is a lot [of] division between White people, Latinx people, and Central Americans. There is a lot [of] division instead of seeing everyone as the same, and a lot of people [do] not see each [the same]. There is disunity.

These examples demonstrate that Latinx immigrants are not a homogenous group of migrants and have racialized and classed hierarchies that exacerbate racialization and criminalization during heightened threats of deportation. These frameworks of othering within the Latinx community were echoed on the Spanish radio shows and were never discussed critically by the Spanish radio DJs. One reason this might occur is because radio show DJs, in this sample, are American citizens (one with a five-generation connection to Hometown). They may not understand the challenges currently affecting undocumented individuals in the United States since they themselves have privilege. While they may be self-identified advocates who are sensitive to the plight of those in their communities, they do not share the struggle of the community they serve (see Rios, 2010). Radio show DJs, while important for the community, ignore the context of Latinx culture beyond that of a Mexican frame and reinforce these notions of the discourse of deservedness as criminal rather than a systemic problem.

While the discourse of deservedness has given rise to the marginalization of some Latinx immigrants, it has also resulted in the call for solidarity against discrimination of all Latinx immigrants. The mobilization for solidarity is directed within the frame of *deserving to stay* while excluding those *deserving to be deported*. Statements like the one made by Jonathan, a Facebook user, who states, ‘This country is a country of immigrants. It is all of us who came here out of necessity or for whatever [reason]. We came to contribute. We came to work, and in unity there is strength’ are consistent with the discourse of deservedness because it frames Latinx immigrants as positive contributors to society. It also operates as a type of erasure for recent immigrants with liminal status having to experience more heighten threats of deportation. About 70% of the respondents framed deserving to stay in the context of unity and mobilization. In the case of Nadia, an avid La Pulga Facebook user and radio listener, she framed her position about why she deserves to stay using the discourse of deservedness:

I have 15 years here. I have my kids here. I have grandkids. What am I going to do in Mexico? From Mexico I came for no other reason than because a delinquent wanted to kidnap my daughter over there. The judicial police over there did not want to do anything because the delinquent had not done anything yet to my daughter. Therefore, I did not wait until he did anything to my daughter. Then I first brought my daughter, then my son, and then I brought my youngest son. For that reason, we are here and not for any other thing. . . I am grateful for Texas because I have a job. Thanks to God. I don’t live in richness, but I don’t lack food to eat. In Matamoros,

people do struggle a lot. There, in Mexico, they don't give you work if you are 35 or 30 years old or above. Here, even an older man can get a job. So, I am here in Texas for that reason because my daughter was in danger of being kidnapped.

While not all our respondents endured the same circumstances in their immigration story, Nadia's story helps to contextualize the reality that many Latinx people who are vulnerable to deportation face.

Although Spanish-speaking radio DJs unintentionally contributed to divisions in the community, during Hometown's rumored ICE threat Radio DJs did emphasize unity in the community and expressed the need for reliable information. During one segment, a radio DJ stated that 'Whether you have papers (legal status) or no papers, we are all the same.' This was a frequent phrase that circulated on the air when callers stated their concerns about disunity. All of the Radio DJs used the term *raza*, a common expression in Latin America to refer to community and family that derives from being of the same race or ethnic background, to emphasize unity within the Hometown area. Although *la raza* in this context is positive, this term is rooted in anti-Black and anti-Indigenous frameworks to normalize and prioritize White *mestizaje* in Latin America (Gayles, 2020). About 55% of the callers during the week in question in 2017 pleaded for stronger unity despite some expressing racialized notions of deportability.

Similar statements were also made by other respondents that emphasize the *positive impact* of Latinx immigrants in society. While some respondents claimed that ICE would not deport individuals who 'are doing things right', some were wary of the new deportation policy changes made more visible by the news and media reports. This was illustrated by Monica when she stated:

Well, more immigrants are suffering in general. But also, those that have documents are getting into problems. And they are also scared because Trump said that the ones that have residency are also going to be deported. Now we are a bit calmer, but we are living in suspense of what Trump is going to do.

The continuous changes to deportation policy leave many mixed-status families uncertain about the future. There is a misconception about the security of legal permanent status among the immigrant community because it has given some Latinx people a false sense of security that they are immune to deportation (Golash-Boza, 2015). The discourse of deservedness is a coping strategy which, ironically and paradoxically, reproduces the frame of Latinx as criminals through various forms of media and fails to acknowledge the complexity of Latinx immigrant identities.

Conclusion

Although heightened threats of deportation may result in unification of vulnerable immigration communities, we found that Latinx people of various legal status

alleviated stress and anxiety by adopting racialized notions of deportability. Deportation, a federal civil procedure, often intersects with criminal procedures because local law enforcement are becoming the first agents of contact. Further, changes in immigration policy's deportation priority levels makes individuals with past criminal proceedings, even if they were never convicted of the crime, more vulnerable to deportation and removal. The misinformation and circulation of false narratives about immigrants with criminal pasts, fail to acknowledge that the damages of mass incarceration also extend to Latinx people (Diaz and Armenta, 2018).

In our study, radio DJs often conceptualized a moral stance on deportation and engaged social justice rhetoric to unify the community but unintentionally contributed to community divisions due their acceptance of policing and structural inequality within the context of Hometown. The participants we interviewed picked up on this moral overtone and used similar phrasing to alleviate their fears and anxiety about deportability. However, this language of morality transitions to a language of belonging for some, noting the ways Latinx citizens and immigrants, regardless of status, positively contribute to the community. The introduction of anti-immigration laws like the Texas Senate Bill 4, that allow local law enforcement agencies to act as federal immigration officers, will require the need for trustworthy outlets of information during times of heightened threats of deportation that do not rely on racialized notions of the undeserving immigrant. The collaboration between federal immigration agencies and local policing efforts will only lead to more divisions within Latinx communities, further entangling criminality within the framework of deportation.

The *discourse on deservedness*, our discursive frame of analysis, occurred across all platforms and emerged in all sources of data. While many members of the Latinx community are uncertain about deportability, many have adopted the discourse of deservedness to combat anxiety about the threat of deportation. This discourse of deservedness positions criminality as the prerequisite for cases of removal, placing blame on individuals who are apprehended by ICE. Paradoxically, this framing alienates some community members while, at the same time, calling for solidarity within the Latinx community, demonstrating that immigrants can adopt the criminalization and marginalizing mechanisms of society to alleviate their anxieties during heightened threats of deportation. Further research should focus on how Mexican immigrants actively distance themselves from other Central and South American Immigrants. The discourse of deservedness serves as a frame that structures information in online communities and on the radio as mechanism of protection from deportation. What we found in our study is a racial formation within the Latinx community based on the prevailing understanding of Latinx immigrants in the United States. This prevailing narrative criminalizes deportation and highlights a lack of understanding about the complexity of Latinx immigration today.

Future research should explore 'colorism' within the Latinx community that may fuel the discourse of belonging and exclusion that focus on the use of racist

frameworks about Latin America within the United States. The current deportation regime groups all Latinx people as homogenous, however, this ‘colorblind’ generalization eliminates the real and dangerous ways in which discrimination permeates immigrant communities (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Interest in the ways Latinx communities use social media to circulate narratives is valuable because it can help frame how misinformation and disinformation can hinder mobilization efforts vital to immigration reform. Although Hometown’s rumored ICE presence occurred in 2016, the results discussed here remain relevant for understanding how Latinx immigrants are affected by deportation conversations. We hope that future work will bring some clarity to the framing of immigration as a racial project in everyday discourse online.

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Notes

1. We use the term ‘Latinx’ in this paper because we want to include people of various intersectional identities into the scholarship of deportation. While the term Latino/Latina has been used previously, these terms often erase the existence of other various identities of Latinidad, gender and sexuality in the process. We do not use the term ‘Hispanic’ because this paper focused only on immigrants from Latin American rather than just European colonized countries that are not located in Latin America. While Mora (2014) provides a valid argument and historical context to the categorization of the term Hispanic, the term was created and promoted as a panethnic category for government bureaucracy that became institutionalized. The reinterpretation and reframing of Hispanic by activist groups created positive consensus of Latinx issues that allowed for mobilization and representation in the political landscape. However, Hispanic, as a panethnic term, creates erasure of the vast differences in racial and ethnic groups in Latin America. Further, the differential treatment of Latinx people in the United States is minimized by the Hispanic category because it provides the illusion of solidarity and suppresses the discriminatory frameworks that Latinx people also inflict on each other.
2. We have changed the precise name of the location where data were collected. Hometown, Texas represents a small metropolitan area that is home to a thriving university community. The name of the university has also been changed to Southeastern University. Participants’ names and identities have also been altered for protection.

3. 287(g) is a DHS federal program that not only fingerprints potential persons of interests but further allows state and local officers trained within the program to perform duties as ICE. According to ICE (2020), there are two types of 287(g) models. The first is the Jail Enforcement Model which is 'designed to identify and process removable aliens with criminal or pending criminal charges who are arrested by state or local [officers], even if those charges are later dropped (ICE, 2020).' The second is the Warrant Service Officer Model which provides 'an opportunity for jurisdictions to participate in narrower cooperative agreements with ICE (ICE 2020).' This program allows for rural jurisdictions that lack the budget and personnel resources to become 287(g) partners with intended interest in the program (ICE, 2019).
4. Secure Communities is framed by ICE as 'a simple and common-sense way to carry out ICE's enforcement priorities for those aliens detained in the custody of another law enforcement agency (LEA). It uses a federal information-sharing partnership between DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that helps to identify in-custody aliens without imposing new or additional requirements on state and local law enforcement (ICE, 2018).' These partnerships create fingerprinting checks to reveal the status of an individual unlawfully present in the United States and creates the illusion that they are in place for public safety by reporting those who are unauthorized to ICE. Executive Order No. 13768 redefined prioritized removal efforts of unauthorized individuals, leading to an increase of apprehensions of undocumented people in jurisdictions with this program (ICE 2018). This is different from ICE's 287(g) program because this program 'require(s) the local law enforcement officers to receive appropriate training and to function under the supervision of ICE officers' (ICE, 2020).
5. These recordings were edited to exclude commercials and music and were originally 48 hours in total.
6. We do not have any demographic information about the gender or age of the listeners of this radio station.
7. The questions we asked journalists centered on their reporting of immigration issues in the community and their intel about immigration enforcement. Radio hosts were asked questions about their experience and context regarding their viewership. They were asked about how they check resources and their connections to the Hometown community and surrounding counties. The project manager of this research team is a community organizer and has access to diverse set of immigrant networks. The majority of the authors on this project are Latinx immigrants and are more in tune with immigration threats and news.
8. We debated how to denote participants in ways that do not further reproduce inequality. On the one hand, feminist ethnographic convention uses pseudonyms as a way to protect yet highlight the humanity and agency of participants. On the other hand, feminist scholars address participants with letters in order to not perpetuate stereotypes given as no list of names can acknowledge the diversity of Latinx culture and lived experience. In this paper we use pseudonyms that are the same in English and in Spanish, hoping to overcome the limits of this convention.
9. While Texas SB4 was first in effect on 7 May 2017, changes have been implemented since its enactment. Originally, SB4 allows local officials to face penalties for declining requests to assist with federal immigration agents and participation was initially mandatory. Similar to Secure Communities, this not a federal program but a state program pushed by Governor Abbott to identify and apprehend potentially unauthorized people. Various attempts to block SB4 from going into effect were made, however, on 13 March 2018, the Court of Appeals ruled that the majority of the bill would stand. In

2020, local officers in Texas can ask about immigration status during a routine traffic stop, however they are not allowed to stop individuals solely on the suspicion of 'illegality'. Asking for documentation is left to the discretion of the local policing agencies in Texas.

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