Interior Immigration Enforcement and the Political Engagement of Youth with Likely Unauthorized Parents

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Long Abstract

Motivation, Objective and Policy Relevance: The past two decades have witnessed an impressive expansion of interior immigration enforcement. Between 2003 and 2013, funding for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency—the federal agency responsible for interior immigration enforcement—increased approximately 80 percent at the same time that the number of apprehensions more than doubled and the number of interior removals increased by three-fold.¹ The increase in the intensity of interior immigration enforcement is also evidenced in the greater participation of state and local governments in a number of immigration enforcement initiatives and programs.

Interior immigration enforcement has been shown to be particularly damaging to families headed by undocumented, yet, long-term residents of the United States (Rosenblum et al. 2014). Between 2010 and 2012, twenty-three percent of total deportations were issued for parents with U.S. citizen children.² These changes in family structure can have a negative impact on child well-being due to the economic losses in household income as single-headed households struggle to make ends meet (Dreby 2012). U.S. citizen children may also find themselves overburdened with adult responsibilities, such as caring for a sibling or working-full time at an early age, which can interfere with their schooling progression (Menjivar 2006, Amuedo-Dorantes and Lopez 2015). Even in the absence of deportation, the family may have to relocate or start living in the shadows in order to evade apprehension, which in turn limits parental employment and earning opportunities (Chaudry et al. 2010, Lopez 2011). In this regard, between 2005 and 2011, 33% of children with likely unauthorized immigrants lived in poverty, relative to 14% of children with likely unauthorized parents (authors’ tabulations using the American Community Survey). And, although U.S. citizen children are eligible for social services, research documents that parents often do not apply for assistance out of fear of being apprehended (Watson 2014). Finally, intensified immigration enforcement breeds fear, stress, and anxiety among the children of unauthorized immigrants (Capps et al. 2007; Chaudry et al. 2010).

² http://www.colorlines.com/articles/nearly-205k-deportations-parents-us-citizens-just-over-two-years
In light of the extreme hardships faced by youth growing up in a household with unauthorized parents, it is reasonable to question how these experiences might influence the registration and voting behaviors of youth with likely unauthorized parents. Among Hispanics, young people comprise a larger share of eligible voters relative to other groups. For example, in 2014, thirty-three percent of Hispanic eligible voters were between the ages of 18-29 compared to just 18 percent for white eligible voters (Lopez et al. 2014). The Pew Hispanic Research Center estimates that 800,000 U.S. born Hispanics turn 18 each year with an additional one million or more projected to reach adulthood annually by 2024. Given the increasing size of the Hispanic youth population, their political participation is of great importance. Thus, to what extent has the civic engagement of youth with likely unauthorized parents been shaped or has the potential to be shaped by immigration policy? On the one hand, civic engagement might increase if Hispanic youth with unauthorized parents have a strong desire to express their discontent with growing up in a household subjected to the fear, anxiety, and financial hardships associated with an increase in enforcement. Lopez and Marcelo (2008) find that U.S. born youth with foreign-born parents are twice as likely as U.S. born youth with U.S. born parents to participate in protest activities. However, it could also be the case that the hardships experienced by youth with unauthorized parents cause them to become politically disenfranchised further emphasizing the already historically low rate of Hispanic voter turnout (Krogstad and Lopez 2014). In this paper, we examine the effects of intensified enforcement on the civic engagement (registration and voting behaviors) of U.S. born Hispanic youth with unauthorized parents.

**Research Methodology**

**Data Sources:** Our main aim is to assess how the intensification of interior immigration enforcement has impacted voting registration and turnout rates of Hispanic youth with a likely unauthorized parent. To that end, we rely mainly on two different data sources: (1) the 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012 Current Population Survey (CPS) November Voting and Registration Supplements, and (2) local and state-level data on the enactment and implementation dates of numerous measures of interior immigration enforcement adopted since 2004.

The November Voting and Registration Supplement includes data on whether an individual registered and voted in the most recent election. We use those responses to capture political engagement and participation. An important characteristic in our analysis is that the CPS enables us to link children with their parents to account for household characteristics. Because the CPS data lacks sensitive information on the immigration status of migrants, we rely on ethnicity and citizenship traits, which have been shown to be good predictors of immigrants’ unauthorized status (Passel and Cohn 2009, 2010), to proxy for the parents’ likely unauthorized
status. Specifically, for most of the analysis, Hispanic non-citizen parents are classified as likely unauthorized.³

We then gather information regarding the timing and geographic scope of interior enforcement policies. Specifically, data on the enactment of state-level employment verification (E-Verify) mandates — often a key element in the Omnibus Immigration Laws (OIL) — and data on OIL are gathered from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) website. Data on the implementation of 287(g) agreements and Secure Communities (SC) at the state and local levels are collected from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 287(g) Fact Sheet website, from Kostandini et al. (2014), and from the ICE’s Activated Jurisdictions document, respectively.⁴ We then construct an index of the intensity of interior immigration enforcement in each county and year in the sample. Our index is the sum of five variables signaling the existence of an E-Verify mandate at the state level, a state level OIL, a local 287(g) agreement, a state-level 287(g) agreement and participation in the Secure Communities program, respectively. Each of those five variables equals 1 if the county that pursued the measure in question in that particular year, and 0 otherwise. The exception is when the measures were in effect for only part of the year, in which case they equal the fraction of covered months over that year. The enforcement index is the sum of all the aforementioned five variables for any county and year and, as such, fluctuates between 0 and 5. It is merged to the CPS Voting and Registration Supplement data by county and year.

Empirical Analysis: We are interested in examining the impact of intensified interior immigration enforcement on voting registration and turnout rates of Hispanic youth ages 18-29 with a likely unauthorized parent. To achieve this aim, we exploit the geographical and time variation in interior enforcement measures using the following benchmark model:

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\begin{align*}
\text{y}_{i,h,c,t} &= \alpha + \beta_1 E_{I,c,t} + \beta_2 LUP_{i,h,c,t} + \beta_3 E_{I,c,t} \ast LUP_{i,h,c,t} + X'_{i,h,c,t} + Z'_{i,h,c,t} + \delta + \\
&\quad \quad \quad \quad + \gamma + W'_{h,c,t} + \epsilon_{i,h,c,t}
\end{align*}
\]

where \(y_{i,h,c,t}\) will be a dummy variable indicative of one of the two outcomes of interest — namely, whether Hispanic youth \(i\) residing in household \(h\), in county \(c\), in year \(t\) registered to vote or voted in the last election. The vector \(E_{I,c,t}\) captures the intensity of interior immigration enforcement in the county \(c\), where the youth resides at time \(t\), whereas \(LUP\) is a dummy variable indicating whether the youth has a likely unauthorized parent. Our coefficient of interest is: \(\beta_3\), which measures how intensified enforcement is impacting the voting behavior of youth with a likely unauthorized parent relative to their counterparts without likely unauthorized parents.

³ In final robustness checks, we would also restrict that category to Hispanic non-citizen parents with other additional traits, such as being Mexican, having no more than a high school education, and having resided in the United States in excess of 5 years to exclude non-citizens with non-immigrant visas.

Equation (1) includes vectors $X_{i,h,c,t}$ and $W_{h,c,t}$, which account for youth and household characteristics known to be potentially correlated with the outcomes being examined. Additionally, equation (1) incorporates a number of county-specific and time-varying characteristics (included in $Z_{c,t}$) potentially influencing our outcomes, as could be the case with local unemployment rates, the presence of large population of unauthorized migrants or political inclinations of the electorate (as captured by the share of the electorate voting Republican in the last congressional elections). To conclude, we also include geographic ($\theta_c$) and temporal ($\mu_t$) fixed-effects, as well as county-specific time trends ($\theta_{c,t}$). County and time fixed-effects address unobserved and time-invariant local area and temporal characteristics known to be correlated with political participation, such as residing in an economically depressed county or being surveyed during the 2008-2009 recession. Finally, county-specific time trends capture a variety of unobserved time-varying characteristics at the county level not addressed by the controls included in $Z_{c,t}$. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

We face a number of econometric challenges in our analysis. One is the selection of areas into different levels of enforcement. While the adoption of tougher immigration enforcement measures needs not be random, it should not be driven by area-specific characteristics correlated to the outcomes of interest. We test whether that is the case by examining if political participation of youth with a likely unauthorized parent in the area prior to the adoption of the enforcement measures was a significant determinant in the timing of adoption of the policies in question. A second challenge is the assumption of parallel trends in political participation of the youth in question. To assess the validity of this assumption, we confirm the lack of a pre-existing diverging, as well as any anticipation effects, using an event-study framework (Almond et al. 2011). To conclude, we also perform a number of robustness checks to check the sensitivity of our findings to alternative definitions of our outcome measures and to the focus on demographic groups more likely to better capture the unauthorized population.

In light of the upcoming presidential elections, understanding how the civic engagement among youth with likely unauthorized parents is influenced by the piece-meal approach to immigration reform is important given that immigration policy will once again be a critical issue.

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5 Youth characteristics will include gender, age and educational attainment. Variables included in the vector of household characteristics will vary with the outcome being examined, but will include information on the composition of the household (such as household income and composition), as well as the age, English proficiency, educational attainment, employment and years of U.S. residency of the household head.
References


ICE. 2012b. “Fact Sheet: Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act”. Available at: www.ice.gov/news/library/factsheets/287g.htm#signed-moa


