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## Do sanctuary policies increase crime? Contrary evidence from a county-level investigation in the United States

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### ABSTRACT

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has rolled out a series of programs that leverage local and state resources to detain and deport undocumented immigrants. There is little understanding, however, about the public safety consequences of mobilizing local police to enforce immigration law. I use ICE administrative records, Uniform Crime Reports, and American Community Survey population estimates to investigate whether and under what circumstances local immigration enforcement is associated with property crime and violent crime. Results show that crime trends in sanctuary and non-sanctuary counties were not significantly different in the first decade of the 2000s. However, after the proliferation of sanctuary practices around 2014, both property crime and violent crime decreased more in sanctuary counties than non-sanctuary counties, net of other predictors of crime. Further, a pooled cross-sectional analysis of 2013–2016 data shows that sanctuary practices strengthen the inverse relationship between proportion foreign-born Latino and property crime, and reverse the positive relationship between proportion native-born Latino and property crime. I theorize that this occurs because sanctuary practices encourage immigrant political integration, have positive spillover effects to non-immigrant Latinx communities, and increase *social harmony*.

### 1. Introduction

Policy makers and researchers in the United States have increasingly been concerned with the entanglement of immigration control with criminal-legal systems (Gupta and Altman 2021; Kohli et al. 2011; Miles and Cox 2014; Stumpf 2006; Treyger et al. 2014). This became a more pressing issue in 2009, when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) launched the Secure Communities, a program that linked FBI databases with Department of Homeland Security databases to automatically check the citizenship status of anyone arrested, anywhere in the country (Cox and Miles 2013). By January 2013, ICE had activated such data-sharing technology in all state and local jails in the country, allowing ICE to track potential non-citizens, and request law enforcement agencies to detain potential non-citizens for questioning, or be notified upon their release (ICE, 2018:201; Meissner et al., 2013). These are called detainer requests and notification requests, respectively.

By 2014, however, over 200 jurisdictions had withdrawn from participating in Secure Communities (ICE 2015; Ramos 2014). In practice, this meant declining detainer and notification requests (Hausman 2020). Jurisdictions that declined to participate cited concerns that Secure Communities would penalize immigrant victims or witnesses of crimes and thus undermine community-police relationships (Chen 2016). Other concerns included morality, legality, and legitimacy of the program (Chen 2016). Declining notifications and detainers is one important way in which local government restricts police officers enforcement of immigration laws.

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Other types of initiatives include barring investigations into immigration violations, limiting ICE's access to jails, and limiting disclosure of information (Lasch et al., 2018).

Although Secure Communities was designed to improve public safety, there is no evidence that crime has decreased as a result (Miles and Cox 2014; Treyger et al. 2014). Emerging work on the consequences of immigration enforcement has found that immigrant-friendly legislation, referred to colloquially as sanctuary policies, has either a null or negative association with violent crime and property crime (Amuedo-Dorantes and Deza 2019; Gonzalez-O'Brien et al., 2019; Hausman 2020; Kubrin and Bartos 2020; Lyons et al. 2013; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019, 2019; Wong 2017). This relationship holds despite researchers operationalizing "sanctuary" in different ways, examining varying units of analysis, at different points in time, and using different analytical techniques (Martínez et al. 2018). Although these studies point to the potential for sanctuary policies to decrease crime, a broader assessment that includes smaller jurisdictions is missing. The current study fills this gap and adds an analysis of whether and to what extent the proportion of Latinos moderates sanctuary policies effect on crime, and an improved measure of sanctuary *practices*, which is a better indicator of actual rather than intended enforcement.

I assembled an original dataset using administrative records and survey data to investigate whether and under what circumstances non-compliance with ICE, which I will refer to as sanctuary practices, is associated with aggregate property crime and violent crime. I also test whether the proportion of foreign-born Latinos and the proportion of native-born Latinos moderate sanctuary practices effect on crime. This is important because foreign-born Latinos are the population most targeted by immigration enforcement, and because of the mounting evidence that the consequences of immigration enforcement spillover to native-born Latinos (Asad 2020; Barranco and Shihadeh 2015; Elizabeth Aranda, Cecilia Menjívar, and Katharine M. Donato 2014; Martínez-Aranda 2020; Menjívar et al. 2018).

Through a series of negative binomial regression models, I find that crime trends in sanctuary and non-sanctuary counties were not significantly different in the first decade of the 2000s. However, using a conditional fixed effects negative binomial regression model, I find that sanctuary practices are associated with a decrease in both property crime and violent crime within counties over time, findings that are in the same direction, but slightly weaker, when using an unconditional fixed effects model. Further, a pooled cross-sectional analysis of 2013–2016 data shows that sanctuary counties strengthen the inverse relationship between proportion of foreign-born Latino and property crime, and reverse the positive relationship between proportion native-born Latino and property crime. Building on prior research, I theorize that this occurs via three principle mechanisms: immigrant political integration, positive spillover effects of sanctuary practices, and increased *social harmony*. First, immigrant political integration efforts, like expanding immigrants' rights through sanctuary practices, are likely to be adopted at the tail end of immigrant integration and incorporation more broadly (Marrow 2009) and in areas where sheriffs have more positive attitudes towards immigrants (Farris and Holman, 2017). Immigrant-friendly policies and practices encourage more full participation in social, political, and economic life, which increases social organization and is protective against crime (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003; Lyons et al., 2013; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019; Sampson and Byron Groves, 1989). Second, there is abundant evidence that because of the racialization of illegality (García, 2017; Menjívar et al., 2018) restrictive immigration policies "spill over" to negatively impact native-born Latinos. Thus, efforts to bolster social and political incorporation of immigrants might spill over in positive ways to impact native-born people and communities that have been racialized as illegal despite holding U.S. citizenship.

Third, *social disharmony* is a Du Boisian analytical concept recently re-articulated by Werth (2022) that provides a generative lens through which to make sense of my findings. Social disharmony was developed by W.E.B. Du Bois, and, complements social disorganization theories by focusing on racial and economic exclusion, paired with racialized systems of oppression as causes of crime, rather than eroded mechanisms of informal social control prioritized by social disorganization theorists (Werth 2022). Thus, in addition to bolstering social organization, I theorize that sanctuary practices may help decrease crime by beginning to dismantle racialized systems that marginalize immigrants and people of color.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Secure Communities and spillover effects

The Secure Communities Program is the most extensive federal-local collaboration to detain and deport undocumented immigrants in US history. The federal government had made prior efforts to mobilize state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce immigration issues, but the scale and scope of the current effort at interior immigration enforcement is unprecedented. Most importantly, once activated, the data sharing component of Secure Communities does not require the buy-in or additional labor from local police chiefs, officers, or sheriffs: all arrestees are finger printed, and all finger prints are shared in inter-operable databases that include 1) Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT) which is the Department of Homeland Security database that tracks immigration history and 2) Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS), which is the FBI database for criminal arrests and convictions (ICE 2011).

Although Secure Communities was designed to increase community safety, there is no evidence that Secure Communities Program is uniformly good for public safety or community well-being (Miles and Cox 2014; Stowell et al., 2013). In fact, there is evidence that enhancing local-federal coordination for immigration enforcement negatively impacts mental and physical health of Latino immigrants (Wang and Kaushal, 2019), decreases enrollment in federal public assistance among Latino citizens due to increased fear of deportation (Alsan and Yang, 2019), marginalizes and racializes Latino immigrants (Jones 2019), and potentially exacerbates toxic ties in mixed-status families (Del Real and Deisy, 2019). Further, complying with Secure Communities takes police officers a significant amount of time, time that could otherwise be spent responding to calls for service. While Secure Communities is most likely to impact undocumented immigrants and undocumented immigrant communities because of their precarious positions and lack of the

protections afforded with citizenship, even native-born Latinos or Latinos with other legal status are impacted by immigration laws (Asad, 2020a; 2020b). This has been referred to as the “spillover effects” of restrictive immigration policies and practices. For example, Phoenix, Arizona has such punitive and highly publicized anti-immigrant laws that when surveyed about likelihood of contacting the police in case of need, even U.S.-born Latinos express reluctance (Menjívar et al. 2018). Further, although foreign-born Latinos are more concerned about deportation than native-born Latinos, about half of all Latinos say that they worry about deportation for themselves or their friends and family (Hugo Lopez, Morin, and Taylor, 2010). This is in part because many U.S.-born and legally authorized Latinos are part of mixed-status households or are embedded in community and family networks that include people who are undocumented or have precarious documentation (Menjívar 2006).

By 2014, over 200 jurisdictions had withdrawn, at least partly, from participating in Secure Communities (Ramos 2014), and ICE started keeping track of these withdrawals (ICE 2015:201). In the current study, however, only 125 counties are counted as sanctuary counties, not 200. This is because while some jurisdictions decline detainer requests, many would still notify ICE upon releasing detainees. In the end these arrestees are still transferred from local jail to ICE custody, and local police still take time to address these requests, thus it does not qualify as a sanctuary practice.

Between November 2014 and January 2017, Secure Communities was temporarily replaced by the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), which operated using the same technology and same mechanisms, but purportedly targeted only people deemed to pose a serious threat to public safety (ICE 2017b; Jácome 2021). However, PEP “has the same policy objectives and relies on a similar level of local cooperation to achieve its purpose” (Jaeger 2016), and there is evidence that under PEP people without criminal records continued to be detained (TRAC 2016). In both programs, if fingerprints match those in the DHS system, ICE’s Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) is notified, and the local ICE agency may request a “detainer hold” which is a request for the jail to hold the person for up to 48 hours. Alternatively, they may request a “notification”, which is a request to notify ICE prior the person’s release (ICE, 2018; Meissner et al., 2013). That being said, there is evidence that under PEP, the reporting violent and property crimes to police increased by 4% among Latinos (Jácome, 2021), which is one of several reasons that any decreases in crime identified in the current study are likely conservative estimates.

## 2.2. Sanctuary policies and crime

Existing research has found that cities and counties with at least one sanctuary policy have either a null or negative association with crime (Gonzalez-O’Brien et al., 2019; Hausman 2020; Lyons et al., 2013; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019, 2019; Wong 2017), and that state-wide sanctuary policies are also unrelated to crime (Kubrin and Bartos, 2020). Further, evidence from 1999 to 2001 cross-sectional data shows that sanctuary policies strengthen the inverse association between tract-level immigrant concentration with homicide and robbery (Lyons et al., 2013). Subsequent research examining trends over time shows that between 1990 and 2010, each percent increase in the undocumented Mexican population resulted in a 5% decrease in the homicide rate, but only in sanctuary cities (Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019). There is evidence from more recent crime data that sanctuary policies resulted in a decrease of domestic homicide rates among Hispanic women from 2003 to 2017 (Amuedo-Dorantes and Deza 2019). Finally, using data from 2010 to 2015, Hausman (2020) finds that sanctuary policies decrease overall deportations by one-third, and decrease non-criminal deportations by about half, but do not have a significant effect on crime. Unlike previous studies, Hausman (2020) defines sanctuary counties as those that decline immigrant detainers, rather counties that passed one sanctuary legislation. However, some those counties that decline detainer requests still will notify ICE upon releasing a detainee and thus may not be protective.

In the current study, I build on and contribute to existing research in three principle ways. First, by using a dataset that includes 3,105 counties, nearly all counties in the United States, I build on work done by Lyons et al. (2013), Gonzalez-O’Brien et al. (2019), and Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez (2019), who focus on 87 large cities, 55 cities, and 107 cities, respectively. While existing work sheds light on sanctuary policies effect on crime in large cities, I contribute by using a larger and more comprehensive data set that includes less densely populated areas, and have often been excluded from criminological research. Hausman (2020) also uses county-level data, but limits the study to the largest 10% of counties by Hispanic population, thus, a broader assessment is still missing.

Second, I use a more restrictive measure of sanctuary policies, which are counties that refuse detainer requests *and* notification requests. This improves on previous work that designates as “sanctuary” a locality that has passed any type of resolution limiting local cooperation with ICE (Amuedo-Dorantes and Deza 2019; Gonzalez-O’Brien et al., 2019; Lyons et al., 2013; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019), which risks being too varied in scope and formality to be a meaningful measure. I expect that a stricter operationalization of sanctuary practices will yield a negative relation between sanctuary and crime.

Finally, by testing whether proportion Latino moderates sanctuary policies effect on crime, I estimate whether and to what extent local immigration policies affect both foreign-born and native-born Latino communities. This is important in light of mounting evidence that immigration enforcement has spillover effects to impact non-immigrants in the United States.

## 2.3. Operationalizing sanctuary policies

Sanctuary policies are local efforts to secure rights for undocumented immigrants, or to restrict the extent to which police officers enforce immigration laws. Sanctuary policies can be providing identification cards without proof of citizenship, imposing limits to when a police officer can inquire about immigration status, or refusing to hold non-convicted prisoners for ICE.

Previous studies have focused on city-level measures of sanctuary and have designated any city with at least one immigrant-friendly policy as a sanctuary city (Amuedo-Dorantes and Deza 2019; Gonzalez-O’Brien et al., 2019; Lyons et al., 2013; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019). *Sanctuary* is a very loose term, however. These policies vary in content and effort, and immigration agents still arrest

and detain people in supposedly sanctuary cities. In addition, there are discrepancies between statements made by politicians regarding sanctuary policies, and the actual practices carried out by police departments. Former Houston Chief of Police Art Acevedo, and Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, have both made public statements declaring Houston a safe and inclusive place for immigrants (Fernandez 2018). However, in practice, Houston Police Department continues to hold suspected undocumented immigrants past their legal release time (Diaz 2017). This points to the discrepancy between policy and practice, and while policies have important symbolic effects, practice has additional consequences. The reverse is also true: some smaller jurisdictions such as Storm Lake, Iowa, have sanctuary practices, but don't publicize their efforts, in order to avoid scrutiny from ICE (Davis 2020; Hoffman 2016).

#### 2.4. Immigrant political incorporation

More expansive rights for immigrants are closely associated with safer communities. For example, traditional immigrant destinations have better and more inclusive infrastructure for immigrants, and have about half the violent crime rate of new immigrant destinations (Ramey 2013). Traditional immigrant destinations are better able to accommodate needs of both established and newly arrived immigrants because they have established systems that help find employment, provide bilingual services, and offer support in navigating educational and political institutions (Ramey 2013; Waters and Jiménez 2005).

Pro-immigrant policies and practices at the county level are an indicator that other local bureaucratic agencies are immigrant-friendly as well. This is because street-level bureaucrats are much faster to respond to needs of new immigrant communities than their colleagues in elected office (Marrow 2009). Public educators and emergency medical personnel are most responsive to the needs of new immigrants, followed by lawyers and law enforcement agents, all of which precede political responses (Lewis and Karthick Ramakrishnan, 2007; Marrow 2009). This means that sanctuary practices are likely adopted at the tail end of broader immigrant integration and incorporation efforts, in areas where immigrants have stronger ties to local institutions. In fact, strong community-institution relationships are key factors in mitigating crime: local police can help protect people from crime, banks can provide loans to start businesses or buy a home, and local politicians that can secure resources for the community (Klinenberg 2004; Vélez 2006).

Although previous studies use social disorganization theories to explain why immigrant concentration, immigrant-friendly policies, and immigrant political opportunities are sometimes protective against crime, I posit that Du Bois's criminological theories of *social disharmony and racial injustice* (Werth 2022) offer additional layers of insight. *Social disharmony*, as principle cause of crime understands crime as a "symptom of wrong social conditions more broadly and from the oppression of Black Americans" (Werth 2022:7). Du Bois was writing about Black Americans, the racial hierarchy born from the legacy of slavery, and the subsequent exclusion of Black Americans from broader social, political, and economic institutions. That being said, the criminalization and incarceration of Latinos in the contemporary United States can also be understood in the context of broader structural histories of oppression and exclusion, for instance, as a result of legacies of colonialism and subsequent migrant labor agreements between the U.S. and Mexico such as the Bracero program (Calavita 1992).

In summary, existing research points to how sanctuary policies and immigrant political representation have either a null or negative association with crime. By using a larger and more comprehensive dataset of U.S. counties, and by using a more restrictive measure, I expect that results will support findings that sanctuary practices have a negative (rather than null) association with crime, an association that extends beyond the large cities studied in previous work. Further, informed by the literature of the spillover effects of immigration enforcement, I expect that sanctuary policies will be more protective against crime in counties that have higher proportions of foreign-born Latinos and native-born Latinos.

The county-level analysis in this paper will complement the existing neighborhood, city, and state-level studies, particularly because county sheriffs and county leadership are the driving force behind policies regarding local police involvement with immigration enforcement (Graber and Marquez 2016). Further, county-level politics shape the distribution of jobs, services, and transportation in a way that is consequential for community wellbeing, but have been somewhat neglected in criminological research because of an "urban bias" (Lee et al. 2003). County-level crime studies might also be sparse because Maltz and Joseph (2002) critiqued the monthly county-level UCR data due to gaps and inconsistent imputation schemes. However, yearly aggregate crime data are more reliable; the UCR has different imputation procedures depending on how much data is missing. For instance, for agencies that do not submit all 12 months of data, the UCR imputes the missing data with the average crime rate of the months submitted (Lynch and Jarvis 2008). When agencies only submit two months or less of data, the UCR replaces the rest with numbers of a similar agency. These agencies represent about 10% of the population (Lynch and Jarvis 2008). Thus, using annual county crime data from the UCR is both appropriate and potentially sheds light on the political structures that increase or decrease safety.

### 3. Data and methods

#### 3.1. Measures

In order to investigate whether and to what extent sanctuary practice are associated with crime, I assembled an original dataset drawing on multiple sources at the county-level. The main dataset includes 3,105 counties for a total of 12,420 county-year observations from 2013 to 2016, which are over 98% of all 3,143 counties and county-equivalents in the United States. Counties in Alaska, Hawaii, and outlying islands are not included. This period begins in 2013 when the Secure Communities Program was fully implemented, and ends in 2016 before the new presidential administration brought other changes to the national political landscape. I include additional data for 2000 and 2012 in order to estimate pre-policy differences in crime trends. Table 1 shows the source of each

variable, which are described below.

The outcome variables for this study are annual crime counts from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) aggregated to the county level. The violent crime index includes robbery, aggravated assault, and homicide. The property crime index includes burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny-theft (Kaplan 2017). Rape is excluded from the study because of significant undercounting (Yung 2013). Although the UCR data include only crimes known to the police, and thus are an imperfect source of victimization, it remains the best national source of data on reported crime. Kaplan (2017) compiled a UCR dataset with identifying geographic information to facilitate merging with data from other sources.

The main independent variable, which is sanctuary status, comes from administrative records collected and used by ICE to track compliance with detainer and notification requests. The database was obtained via FOIA request by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC). It includes the jurisdiction, county, current detainer/notification acceptance status, and month/year the jurisdiction began declining detainees. I checked the ICE data against three other sources for validity: 1) declined detainees list published by Texas Tribune 2) TRAC Syracuse immigration data tool on detainees and 3) Center for Immigrations Studies update on sanctuary jurisdictions (ICE 2017a; TRAC 2020; Vaughn 2016). Two counties that could not be validated were dropped from the dataset: Jasper County, Illinois, and Alpine County, California. Some of the counties that I designated as sanctuary counties did accept a portion of the detainees requested. However, there are few or no jurisdictions that do not coordinate with ICE under any circumstances, thus, for the purposes of this study, two sources confirming non-coordination with ICE were sufficient. By this measure, about 4% of counties were sanctuary counties by 2016. Table 2 shows the total number of sanctuary counties by year. The administrative records I use include the “date stopped accepting detainees”, which means that according to this data, the counties that stopped accepting notifications and detainees did not revert, at least not during the time of the study. By 2016, there are 123 sanctuary counties, 2,511 non sanctuaries, and the remaining 471 counties accept notifications but not detainees. Although these “moderate” sanctuary counties refuse to hold detainees for extra time, they will notify ICE upon the person’s release, which results in detainees being transferred to ICE custody. Thus, because notifications are not a protective practice, I created a binary measure of sanctuary practices: does not accept notifications or detainees = 1, rest = 0.

Using the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year population estimates, I include several county characteristics that prior research has linked to aggregate crime. The ACS data include 5-year averages of the following years: 2008–2012, 2009–2013, 2010–2014, 2011–2015, and 2012–2016. For simplicity, references to these data in the remainder of the manuscript state only the final year of the five-year average (e.g. 2012 refers to the 5-year average from 2008 to 2012). These include the natural log of the total population and the natural log of population density. Residential instability is measured as the percent of the population that moved since the previous year (Boggess and Hipp 2010; Martinez 2000; Sampson et al. 1997). Inequality is measured using the county-level Gini coefficient of income inequality (Pratt and Cullen 2005; Wenger 2019). The 2014 Gini coefficient is used to impute the 2013 values, since it was not included in the 2013 American Community Survey. I replicate Peterson and Krivo’s (2000) disadvantage index, which is calculated from average z-scores of six items: The percent of secondary-sector low-wage jobs, jobless rate for the portion of the population aged 16–64, percent professionals and managers (reverse-coded), percent female-headed households, percent over 25 who have graduated from high school (reverse-coded), and percent of population living below poverty. I include percent non-Hispanic Black, percent non-Hispanic Asian, and percent native-born Latino because although “race” is not meaningfully linked to crime, racial residential segregation in the United States has resulted in heightened vulnerability in Black and Latino communities when compared to White communities (Hernandez et al. 2016; Krivo and Peterson 2000; Martínez, Stowell, and Lee, 2010; Phillips 2002). Due to some evidence that higher concentration of foreign born residents is associated with less crime, I also include the percent of the population that is foreign-born Latino (Ousey and Kubrin 2018).

Finally, a higher proportion of votes for democratic candidates may represent political opportunities for immigrants, and act as a

**Table 1**  
Source of variables.

Variables	Description	Date	Source
Part I Index Crimes	County level violent and property crime counts and rates per population	2000–2016	Uniform Crime Reports [Jack Kaplan, ICPSR 37061]
Sanctuary County	Yes Sanctuary, 1: Decline notifications & detainees Not Sanctuary, 0: Accepts one or both	2013–2016	Immigration and Customs Enforcement [Immigrant Legal Resource Center]
% Votes for Democratic Candidate	% of total county votes that went to democratic presidential candidate	2012, 2016	2012 election data obtained from The Guardian, and 2016 data scraped from <a href="http://Townhall.com">Townhall.com</a> . [Compiled by <a href="http://McGovern.com">McGovern</a> (2017)].
<b>Demographic covariates from Census (2000), and American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2012–2016)</b>			
Population (ln)	Natural log of total population		
Logged population Density	Natural log of population density per square mile		
Gini Coefficient	Gini coefficient of income inequality. 0 = perfectly equal 1 = perfectly unequal (only in ACS)		
Disadvantage Index	Average z-scores of: % lowest wage jobs, % unemployed, professionals and managers (reverse-coded), % female-headed households, % graduated from high school (reverse coded), % below poverty		
% Moved	% of total population that moved since last year (only in ACS)		
% Racial/ethnic makeup	% of total population that is non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic Asian, and native-born Latino		
% Foreign born Latino	% of total population that is foreign born Latino		

**Table 2**  
Number of counties that decline detainees and notifications by year.

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Sanctuary = 1	2	104	122	123
Yes Sanctuary: decline notifications & detainees				
Sanctuary = 0	3	412	469	471
Moderate Sanctuary, accept notifications but not detainees				
Sanctuary = 0	3100	2589	2514	2511
Not Sanctuary: accepts both notifications & detainees				
Total	3105	3105	3105	3105

Note: dates for sanctuary level = 1 is estimated from “date of first or last meeting between Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) and local government). Because counties understood participation in Secure Communities as mandatory, the majority complied until it became clear that participation was optional. Thus, starting in 2014, many counties started opting out.

measure of political liberalness and pro-immigrant support (Lyons et al., 2013; Steil and Vasi, 2014). Therefore, following previous research, I include percent votes for a democratic candidate in the 2012 presidential election and the 2016 presidential election to account for political orientation and other cultural aspects of society that are linked to, but separate from, structural and demographic characteristics. I retrieved county-level voting data from *The Guardian Datablog* for the 2012 presidential election, and from [Townhall.com](http://Townhall.com) for the 2016 presidential election, that was compiled and made available by [McGovern \(2017\)](http://McGovern.com).

### 3.2. Analytical strategy

The main empirical question of this paper is: when and under what circumstances are immigrant-friendly practices associated with crime? Using this question as a starting point, the analysis that follows seeks to accomplish four main objectives: A) estimate the association between county-level sanctuary practices and county-level crime at a cross-section, B) test the effect of potential moderators such as population foreign-born Latino and population native-born Latino, C) understand whether and how crime changed within counties after sanctuary policy adoption, and D) establish whether prior crime trends can explain the differences or lack of differences in counties that would eventually adopt sanctuary practices compared to those that would not. In what follows, I outline the analytical strategy used to accomplish each research objective.

*Objective A: Estimate the association between sanctuary policies and crime at a cross-section.*

To estimate the association between sanctuary policies and crime at a cross-section, I first use a negative binomial regression model on pooled count data, which is a Poisson-based model that accounts for overdispersion (Gardner et al. 1995; Hilbe 2011; Osgood 2000). This is important because although violent crime and property crime are of significant social concern, they are relatively rare events. Aggregate crime rates will be much more variable in areas with a lower population, for instance, in a small county with 60,000 people, an increase in five crimes in one year will increase the crime rate by 8 per 100,000. Comparatively, in Los Angeles County, a county with 10 million people, an increase in five crimes in one year corresponds to a crime rate of 0.05 per 100,000 people. This means that estimated crime rates are much more precise in large counties than small counties, and that the standard error will be larger in small counties than in large counties. This violates an assumption of ordinary least squares regression, which is homogeneity of error variance (Osgood 2000). I address this issue by estimating crime counts, instead of rates, and by using a negative binomial regression model, a poisson-based model that is based on the assumption that underlying data are nonnegative integer counts of events, accounts for overdispersion, and is commonly used to model counts (Gardner et al., 1995; Hilbe 2011; Osgood 2000).

Model 1 includes all 12,420 county-year observations and estimates whether, on average, there are differences in crime in sanctuary vs. non-sanctuary counties. I include population size as the exposure variable, the coefficients therefore could be interpreted as differences in crime per capita. The equation for model 1 is as follows:

$$\text{Model 1: } \ln(C_i) = \ln(n_i) + \beta_1 S_i + \beta_2 X_i + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

Where  $C_i$  is the crime count in county  $i$ ,  $n_i$  is the population at risk, in this case, total population of county  $i$ ,  $S_i$  is whether county will eventually adopt a sanctuary practice (1 = yes, 0 = no).  $X_i$  are covariates: population size, population density, disadvantage, residential instability, racial/ethnic make-up, percent foreign-born Latino, and political liberalism.

Objective B: Test the effect of potential county-level moderators such as proportion foreign-born Latino and proportion native-born Latino.

In models 2 and 3 I include an interaction between eventual adoption of sanctuary policy with percent foreign-born Latino and percent native-born Latino to estimate whether these county characteristics moderate sanctuary policies effect on crime. The equation for these models are as follows:

$$\text{Model 2: } \ln(C_i) = \ln(n_i) + \beta_1 S_i^* \beta_2 F_i + \beta_3 X_i + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

$$\text{Model 3: } \ln(C_i) = \ln(n_i) + \beta_1 S_i^* \beta_2 N_i + \beta_3 X_i + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

Where  $C_i$  is the crime count in county  $i$ ,  $n_i$  is the population at risk, in this case, total population of county  $i$ ,  $S_i$  is whether the county

will eventually adopt a sanctuary practice (1 = yes, 0 = no),  $F_i$  and  $N_i$  are percent foreign-born Latino and percent native-born Latino, respectively.  $X_i$  are covariates: population size, population density, disadvantage, residential instability, racial/ethnic makeup, and political liberalism.

*Objective C: Understand whether and how crime changed within counties after sanctuary policy adoption.*

Model 4 is an conditional fixed effects negative binomial regression to estimate whether crime changes *within counties* in the aftermath of sanctuary practices adopted between 2013 and 2016. The advantage of using panel data is to be able to control for all stable covariates without having to include them in the model. Therefore, with the fixed effects specification, only changes within counties are used to estimate the outcome variable. Previous studies that use fixed effects negative binomial regression models to study aggregate crime include [Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez \(2019\)](#), [Hausman \(2020\)](#), and [Payton et al. \(2015\)](#). As a model sensitivity test, I include model 5, an unconditional fixed effects model in which dummy variables for each year and each county are included. Because Stata cannot process dummy variables for each of the 3105 counties, in this additional model I limit the analysis only to large counties that have a population one standard deviation above the mean, this results in 481 counties, and 1924 county-years.

$$\text{Model 4: } \ln(C_{i,t}) = \ln(n_{i,t}) + \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_{i,t} + \beta_2 X_{i,t} + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

$$\text{Model 5: } \ln(C_{i,t}) = \ln(n_{i,t}) + \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_{i,t} + \beta_2 X_{i,t} + \alpha_i + \alpha_{2i} + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

Where  $C_{i,t}$  is crime count per capita in county  $i$  in year  $t$ ,  $n_{i,t}$  is the population of county  $i$  in year  $t$ ,  $S_{i,t}$  is whether that county  $i$  has a sanctuary policy by year  $t$  (1 = yes, 0 = no).  $X_{i,t}$  are covariates,  $\alpha_i$  is a year fixed effect which are included as dummy variables for each year, with 2013 as the reference year, and  $\alpha_{2i}$  is a county fixed effect which are included as dummy variables for each county that has a population one standard deviation above the mean. I cluster the standard errors for the repeated observations per county. The fixed effects specified in this model capture other relatively constant and unobserved characteristics that may affect official crime rates such as region of the country, or racial segregation. This reduces bias from differences across counties because only within-county information is used to estimate the statistical influence of independent variables such as sanctuary status or sociodemographic controls on the property crime or violent crime index. The year fixed effects control for any macro-level events that might impact crime across the country, such as overall perception of economic hardship, which has an independent effect on crime from more “objective” measures of hardship ([Rosenfeld and Fornango 2007](#)).

*Objective D: Establish whether prior crime trends can explain the differences or lack of differences in crime trends in counties that would eventually adopt sanctuary practices compared to those that would not.*

Finally, model 6 estimates the change in crime rates from 2000 to 2012, and model 7 estimates the change in crime rates from 2013 to 2016, in counties that would eventually adopt sanctuary practices and those that would not. Here I estimate rates, and not counts.

$$\text{Model 6: } \Delta P_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \Delta S_i + \beta_2 \Delta X_i + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

$$\text{Model 7: } \Delta R_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \Delta S_i + \beta_2 \Delta Y_i + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

Where  $\Delta P_i$  is the change in crime rate in county  $i$  between 2000 and 2012,  $\Delta S_i$  is whether county will eventually adopt a sanctuary practice (1 = yes, 0 = no), and  $\Delta X_i$  are change in sociodemographic indicators between 2000 and 2012.  $\Delta R_i$  is the change in crime rate in county  $i$  between 2013 and 2016, and  $\Delta Y_i$  are change in socio demographic indicators between 2013 and 2016.

**Table 3**  
Descriptive statistics of US Counties in 2016, by Sanctuary Status.

	Non-sanctuary N = 2511		Moderate Sanctuary N = 471		Sanctuary Counties N = 123	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Population	84,648	302,000	133,000	296,000	330,000	657,000
Population Density (log)	3.85	1.62	3.4	2.02	4.81	2.30
Gini Coefficient of Inequality	.44	3.52	.44	3.46	.45	3.28
Disadvantage Index	-.024	.67	-.33	.68	-.146	.70
Residential Instability	7.56	3.45	7.85	3.61	9.47	3.16
Percent Non-Hispanic White	77.56	19.57	78.23	19.96	71.12	19.73
Percent Black	10.13	15.45	3.6	6.7	6.17	11.23
Percent Asian	.98	1.66	1.61	2.81	3.93	5.64
Percent Native-Born Latino	5.7	10.1	8.4	12.7	9.3	8.4
Percent Foreign-Born Latino	2.58	4.28	2.85	4.11	5.25	5.31
Percent Votes Obama (2012)	37.08	14.25	42.80	14.78	49.20	16.55
Percent Votes Clinton (2016)	30.41	14.61	34.68	15.83	45.30	18.53
Crime Rate per 100,000						
Violent Crime	210	202	214	341	276	308
Property Crime	1630	1110	1579	1084	2126	1176

4. Results

Evidence from this study shows that crime trends in sanctuary and non-sanctuary counties were not significantly different in the first decade of the 2000s. However, an analysis of trends over time shows that sanctuary practices, in the form of declined notification and detainer requests, lead to a post-hoc decline in crime rates. Further, a pooled cross-sectional analysis of 2013–2016 data shows that sanctuary counties strengthen the inverse association between proportion foreign-born Latino and property crime, and reverse the positive association between proportion native-born Latino and property crime. On the other hand, sensitivity tests show that moderate sanctuary counties do not have the same protective effect as full sanctuary counties. This was expected because detainees will still be transferred to ICE, thus does not qualify as a protective practice, and people flagged as undocumented will still end up entangled in the detention and deportation system. In what follows, these results are each discussed in more detail.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for all counties in 2016. On average, sanctuary counties in 2016 had higher rates of property crime and violent crime than non-sanctuary counties. This is consistent with prior MSA-level findings that in both 2000 and 2010 cities with sanctuary legislation had higher levels of robbery and homicide than non-sanctuary cities (Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019). Sanctuary counties on average have a higher population density and are nearly four times more populated than non-sanctuary counties. Although sanctuary counties have slightly less inequality than other counties as indicated by a higher Gini coefficient, they are more disadvantaged overall, and have higher residential instability. Sanctuary counties on average have more than five times as many Asian residents, a significantly higher proportion of native-born Latino, and twice as many foreign-born Latinos than non-sanctuary counties. The correlation between percent native-born Latino and percent foreign-born Latino is 0.63. There are a few counties in which there are more people who identify as foreign-born Latino than those that identify as Latino, resulting in a negative number of native-born Latinos. In these 15 counties, the number of native-born Latinos is coded as zero. Sanctuary counties have a smaller proportion of Black residents, and a higher percentage of votes for democratic presidential candidates than non-sanctuary counties.

When estimated at a cross section, results from negative binomial regression models show that sanctuary counties are not

**Table 4**  
Negative binomial regression models: Estimating the association between sanctuary policies and crime on pooled data, 2013–2016.

	Property Crime			Violent Crime		
	Baseline	% Foreign Born Latino	% Latino	Baseline	% Foreign Born Latino	% Latino
<b>Main Effects:</b>						
Sanctuary County	0.02 (0.04)	0.15* (0.07)	0.10 (0.06)	0.01 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.10)
Ln Population	0.22*** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.25*** (0.02)	0.25*** (0.02)	-0.08 (0.10)
Ln Population density	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.08 (0.10)
Gini Index	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.08 (0.10)
Disadvantage Index	0.22*** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.39*** (0.05)	0.39*** (0.05)	-0.08 (0.10)
Residential Instability	0.04*** (0.00)	0.04*** (0.00)	0.04*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	-0.08 (0.10)
% Black	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	-0.08 (0.10)
% Asian	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.08 (0.10)
% Foreign-Born Latino	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.08 (0.10)
% Native-Born Latino	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	-0.08 (0.10)
% Democrat 2012	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.08 (0.10)
% Democrat 2016	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.01* (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)	-0.08 (0.10)
<b>Interaction Effects:</b>						
Sanctuary # Foreign- Born Latino		-0.03* (0.01)			0.01 (0.02)	
Sanctuary # Native- Born Latino			-0.01* (0.00)			0.01 (0.01)
Constant	-7.15*** (0.21)	-7.16*** (0.21)	-7.16*** (0.21)	-9.86*** (0.32)	0.00*** (0.00)	0.00*** (0.00)
Lnalpha	-0.76*** (0.05)	-0.76*** (0.05)	-0.76*** (0.05)	-0.51*** (0.04)	-0.51*** (0.04)	-0.51*** (0.04)
Observations	12,420	12,420	12,420	12,420	12,420	12,420

Standard errors in parentheses.  
\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001.



significantly associated with property or violent crime. These findings are shown in the baseline models in Table 4, and are consistent with previous findings at the MSA-level in which Lyons et al. (2013) did not find any significant association between sanctuary legislation and homicide or robbery at a cross-section in the year 2000. Interaction terms, however, show that in sanctuary counties, one percent increases in foreign-born Latinos and native-born Latinos are associated with three percent and one percent decreases in property crime, respectively. These findings are illustrated in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. Interaction terms for violent crime, however, were not significant. Although previous research finds that sanctuary policies strengthen the inverse relationship between immigrant concentration and homicide at the city and tract level, this might not be observable at county level (Lyons et al., 2013; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019). Theoretically, however, these findings are in alignment: immigrant concentration has for the most part been associated with lower crime (Ousey and Kubrin 2018), and this paper joins Lyons et al. (2013) and Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez (2019) in demonstrating that immigrant-friendly policies and practices further strengthen the link between immigrant concentration and public safety.

Consistent with prior research, the county population is significantly associated with higher property and violent crime. However, population density is only associated with higher violent crime. These mixed results mirror mixed findings in existing population density research (Battin and Crowl 2017; Christens and Speer 2005; Regoeczi 2002). As expected, the Gini coefficient of inequality, the disadvantage index, and residential instability are associated with higher rates of crime (Brush 2007; Krivo et al. 2009; Stucky et al. 2012). Each 1% increase the Black population is associated with 1% increase in violent crime, but not property crime. Each 1% increase in the Asian population is associated with a 2% decrease in property crime, but not violent crime. Each 1% increase native-born Latinos is associated with a 1% increase in both property crime and violent crime. Finally, each 1% increase in the foreign-born Latinos is associated with a 2% decrease in violent crime, which supports the immigrant revitalization perspective. The immigrant revitalization perspective posits that immigrant concentration bolsters social cohesion and neighborhood vitality in a way that has positive results for public safety (Ousey and Kubrin 2018). Political liberalism is associated with lower violent crime in 2012, but higher violent crime in 2016. These shifting relationships between percent democratic votes and crime are not the focus of this study, but point to interesting questions about how and for whom political climate and partisanship shape public safety. Although an emerging body of research is examining how partisanship is associated with opinion about crime, law enforcement, and immigration, the relationship between politics and crime remains understudied (for an exception see Koopmans and Olzak 2004), and is gaining in relevance because of how the Trump administration galvanized white power organizations, and the increase in hate crimes towards Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a public health crisis which has been racialized by political statements (NPR 2021a; 2021b).

Evidence from more rigorous analysis of trends over time shows that the adoption of sanctuary practices is associated with within-county decreases in both violent and property crime. These results are shown in Table 5. Post-hoc decreases in violent crime are consistent with neighborhood level and city level studies that find that sanctuary policies are followed by decreases in robbery (Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019). The unconditional fixed effects negative binomial regression included in the table shows coefficients of a similar size and in the same direction.

Finally, there is no evidence that between 2000 and 2012 there were significant differences in crime between counties that would eventually adopt sanctuary practices vs those that would not. However, between 2013 and 2016 violent crime decreased more in sanctuary counties on average than in non-sanctuary counties. These findings are shown in Table 6. The comparison of these two tables

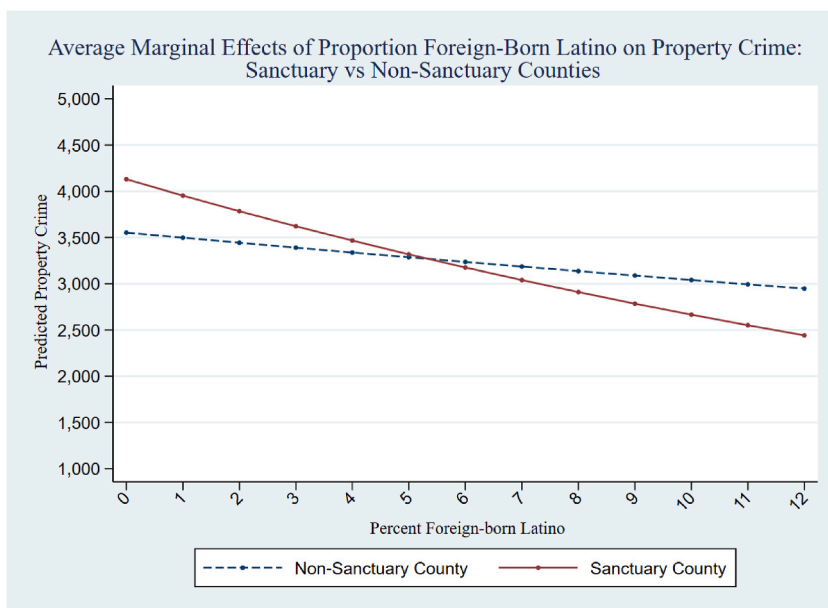


Fig. 1. Average marginal effects of proportion foreign-born Latino on property crime.

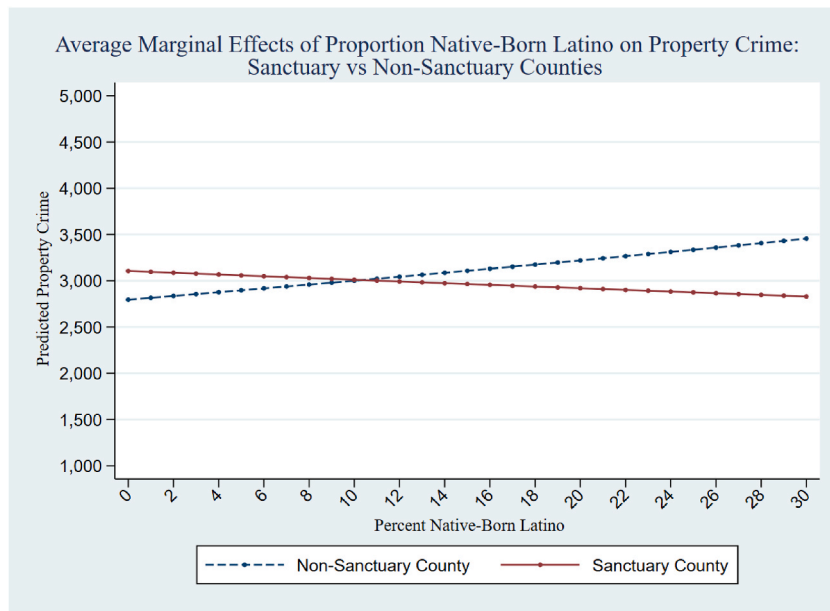


Fig. 2. Average marginal effects of proportion native-born Latino on property crime.

Table 5

Fixed effects negative binomial regression models: Estimating the effect of sanctuary policies on crime within counties, 2013–2016.

	Conditional All Counties		Unconditional Only Largest Counties	
	Property	Violent	Property	Violent
Sanctuary County	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.09*** (0.02)	-0.04† (0.02)	-0.06* (0.02)
Dummy for Year	YES	YES	YES	YES
Dummy for County	NO	NO	YES	YES
Constant	-3.04*** (0.24)	-2.41*** (0.29)	9.97 (28.60)	-5.47 (35.08)
Lnalpha			-4.35*** (0.03)	-4.08*** (0.04)
Observations	12,232	12,136	1924	1924

Standard errors in parentheses.

†p < .1, \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001.

suggests that crime reduction on average occurred after sanctuary practices were implemented, rather than being a reflection of declining crime rates in counties that eventually adopted sanctuary practices.

Table 7 panel A shows the same model dis-aggregated by type of crime: like Table 6, Table 7 shows that between 2000 and 2012 there were no significant differences changes in crime in eventual sanctuary counties vs non-sanctuary counties. Panel B shows that

Table 6

Estimating change in crime rates per 100,000 residents.

	2000–2012		2013–2016	
	Violent	Property	Violent	Property
Sanctuary County	11.8 (11.52)	64 (53.82)	-16.8* (7.19)	-34.83 (26.78)
Change in county-level covariates	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-38.11** (12.19)	55.71 (56.96)	-4.57* (1.86)	-223.48*** (6.94)
Observations	6210	6210	12,420	12,420

Standard errors in parentheses.

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001.

between 2013 and 2016 robbery and burglary decreased more in sanctuary counties than in non-sanctuary counties. Tables 6 and 7 together show that the decrease in violent crime was driven by decreases in robbery, and that although property crime did not significantly change when analyzed in aggregate, burglary decreased more in sanctuary counties than non-sanctuary counties.

## 5. Discussion

Scholars and practitioners working in the field of immigration have been increasingly concerned with the linking of criminal and immigration-related databases through restrictive immigration initiatives. While these linkages purport to improve public safety by identifying and removing deportable criminals, there is little evidence that public safety has increased as a result. In fact, evidence from this study shows the contrary, that expansive immigration policies and practices, not restrictive ones, contribute to safer communities. Cross-sectional analysis show that the benefit of sanctuary practices is most evident in counties with higher proportions of Latinos, which makes sense considering that Latinx communities, both documented and undocumented, are most vulnerable to changes in immigration policies and practices, and have the most to gain from more immigrant-friendly ones. Subsequent analysis of trends over time shows that sanctuary practices lead to a post-hoc decline in crime rates, findings that were driven by declines in robbery and burglary.

These findings make four theoretical contributions at the intersection of immigrant political integration, spillover effects of sanctuary policies, and criminology. First, *sanctuary practices reflect and reinforce immigrant political and bureaucratic incorporation*. Law enforcement and court systems, along with elected officials, tend to have the least inclusive orientation towards Hispanic newcomers, even in areas where other bureaucrats such as school and hospital administrators are making adjustments to accommodate foreign-born residents (Marrow 2009). What this means is that in areas with sanctuary practices, immigrants are more likely to find accommodating environments across other institutions as well. In a separate line of work, there is consistent evidence that there is a negative, albeit small, association between immigrant concentration and crime (Ousey and Kubrin 2018). My findings are consistent with Lyons et al. (2013) and Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez (2019) who find that sanctuary practices reinforce the negative association between immigrant concentration and crime.

Although I do not have the data to test the specific mechanism, I theorize that sanctuary practices reflect and reinforce increased access to local institutions, more positive relationships with police, and increased representation in elected office, which are community characteristics that protective against crime (Lyons et al., 2013; Vélez 2006). When local law enforcement provides the same rights to undocumented immigrants as they would other residents, immigrants are more incorporated into the social fabric, have increased access to local institutions as well as more formal and more regulated opportunities for employment and education. This is consistent with prior research that shows that in more immigrant-friendly contexts, local residents are more free to invest in their communities in other ways, such as building community organizations, or advocating for more bike lanes and more greenspaces, all of which increase community wellbeing (Garcia 2019; Sharkey 2019).

Another way to understand the protective effect of sanctuary policies is through Du Bois's criminological theories of social disharmony and racial injustice (Werth 2022). Du Bois's theory of social disharmony and racial injustice posits that it is racial inequality and racially exclusive social structures that are the cause of crime and violence. Thus, crime-reducing interventions informed by this theory should focus on eradicating systems of oppression and economic injustice (Werth 2022), which in this case would be eradicating punitive immigration enforcement policies and practices, efforts that can go hand-in-hand with more community-oriented solutions to crime such as establishing community and recreational centers in target communities, interventions that took place in Chicago and that were informed by theories of social disorganization (Schlossman and Sedlak 1983; Shaw and McKay 1942; Werth 2022).

Sanctuary policies and practices both symbolically attenuate the image of the criminalized immigrant, while also erode racialized legal systems which target Latinos and other non-white immigrants for detention and removal. By doing so, sanctuary practices encourage a social structure that is more expansive and inclusive, particularly along the lines of race/ethnicity and documentation status.

Second, *sanctuary practices spill-over to impact non-immigrant Latinos and Latinx communities in the United States*. There is mounting evidence that restrictive immigration policies spillover to impact native-born Latinos, who are not legally subject to immigration laws. These studies demonstrate that in punitive policy contexts, even native-born Latinos are reluctant to contact the police in the case of a crime, express heightened fear of deportation, and perform worse on some indicators of educational achievement (Asad 2020; Bellows 2018; Menjívar et al. 2018). My findings provide evidence that the spillover mechanism occurs for expansive and immigrant-friendly practices as well. I find that sanctuary practices *reverse* the positive association between percent native-born Latino and crime. This finding builds on previous work that sanctuary policies reinforce the negative association between immigration and crime (Lyons et al., 2013; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2019), and sheds light on the overlooked possibility that the benefits of immigrant-friendly practices expand beyond immigrant communities to positively impact native-born communities as well.

This is important because while predominantly Latino areas in the United States tend to have lower rates of crime than predominantly Black areas, they tend to have higher rates of crime than White areas (Feldmeyer 2010). Researchers theorize that Latino areas have less crime than comparable Black areas due to their structural positions: overall lower levels of disadvantage, higher levels of immigrant concentration, better relationships with local bureaucrats, and proximity to White neighborhoods (Vélez 2006). However, Latino areas also have higher rates of crime than predominantly White areas (Feldmeyer 2010). What I find in this paper is that sanctuary practices, are one way to mitigate the positive association between Latino concentration and crime. Immigrant friendly sanctuary practices can bolster some of the very mechanisms that make Latino areas moderately safe, such as, relationships with local institutions and increased participation in the formal labor market.

Table 7

Panel A. Estimating change in crime rates per 100,000 residents, 2000–2012.

	Model 5a	Model 5b	Model 5c	Model 5d	Model 5e	Model 5f
	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Homicide	Burglary	Motor Vehicle Theft	Larceny
Sanctuary County	2.76 (2.13)	7.25 (10.30)	-0.02 (0.39)	21.70 (16.17)	1.04 (6.12)	26.18 (38.78)
Change in county-level covariates	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-11.03*** (2.22)	-29.54** (10.74)	-2.06*** (0.40)	52.24** (16.85)	-70.04*** (6.38)	35.71 (40.41)
Observations	6210	6210	6210	6210	6210	6210

**Panel B. Estimating Change In Crime Rates per 100,000 Residents, 2013–2016**

Sanctuary County	-7.36*** (1.01)	-9.66 (6.97)	0.25 (0.38)	-48.27*** (10.16)	-0.26 (3.75)	13.61 (18.57)
Change in county-level covariates	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-0.63* (0.26)	-3.54* (1.80)	0.28** (0.10)	-97.00*** (2.63)	14.03*** (0.97)	-142.52*** (4.80)
Observations	12,420	12,420	12,420	12,420	12,420	12,420

Standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Third, *sanctuary practices increase social organization*. Findings in this paper show that after the proliferation of sanctuary practices around 2014, crime decreased more in sanctuary counties than non-sanctuary counties, net of other predictors of crime. These differences were driven by decreases in robbery and burglary. Robbery and burglary are unique because they are forms of “parasitical consumption” in the sense that the perpetrators often survive or subsist from what they obtain in these endeavors (Rosenfeld and Fornango 2007). This is distinct from aggravated assault or homicide in which there is likely no material benefit. The anomie tradition in sociology posits that this type of parasitic consumption increases in times of social disorganization, when the culturally agreed upon values of economic success do not align with legitimate ways of achieving those goals (Merton 1938; Messner and Rosenfeld 2013). In criminological literature this is known as “strain theory”. Further, incentives for burglary and robbery are higher when there are more opportunities to re-sell stolen goods in an illegitimate market (Venkatesh and Alladi, 2008). It is important to note that immigrants are likely to be *victims* of these types of crimes, because perpetrators believe they have no recourse to the law (Barranco and Shihadeh 2015). By encouraging immigrant incorporation, sanctuary practices bring more people into mainstream networks to seek employment, housing, health care, and other services, thus diminishing the need for illegitimate markets, increasing broad access to protection of law enforcement, therefore also decreasing opportunities to sell stolen goods.

Fourth, *because sanctuary practices encourage crime reporting, the protective effect of sanctuary practices on crime in this and previous research is a conservative estimate*. Previous research has found that punitive immigration policies, and awareness of such policies, can lead to negative attitudes about police and decreased crime-reporting intentions (Menjívar et al. 2018; Menjívar and Bejarano, 2004; Messing et al., 2015; Muchow and Amuedo-Dorantes 2020). More recent research shows that immigrant-friendly sanctuary policies encourage crime reporting among Latinx communities (Amuedo-Dorantes and Arenas-Arroyo 2021; Amuedo-Dorantes and Deza 2019; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2021). Further, the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP) replaced Secure Communities between 2015 and 2017 was intended to target only the people convicted of serious crimes, rather than immigration violations. This shift from targeting all undocumented people to only the ones convicted of serious crimes increased crime reporting to police by 4% among Latinos in Dallas, Texas (Jácome 2021). These findings are important because the crime variables used in this study and in previous studies investigating the sanctuary policies-crime link are from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). While the UCR are one of the most common ways researchers study crime in the United States, they keep track only of crimes that have come to the attention of the police. We know from victimization surveys that about half of crimes are not reported to the police (Morgan and Thompson 2021). The goal of this study was to assess whether and under what circumstances sanctuary practices might be related to property crime and violent crime. If sanctuary practices also impact crime reporting, this threatens the validity of the measurement. What I find is that sanctuary practices are associated with less crime, specifically in areas with higher concentration of native-born and foreign-born Latinos. Is it possible that these findings are driven by changes in crime reporting? If sanctuary practices have an effect on the reporting of crime, it will be a positive effect, and will be particularly evident in areas with higher native-born and foreign-born Latinos. What this means is that the negative association between sanctuary policies and crime is likely a conservative estimate.

These findings demonstrate that despite an unpredictable national immigration enforcement context, local institutional practices can have meaningful benefits for public safety in ways that benefit both immigrant and non-immigrant communities. By decriminalizing immigration, and disentangling immigration enforcement from the criminal justice system, US residents will be able to take care of themselves, their neighbors, and their communities. Specifically, public safety will be bolstered in three principal ways: first, by building trust with the very communities that the police rely on to report crime and cooperate on police investigations. Second, by encouraging residents to contact the police in case of victimization or fear of victimization, rather than retaliate and exacerbate cycles of violence (Kirk et al., 2012; Menjívar and Bejarano, 2004; Theodore and Habans 2016). And third, by extending police protection to all residents, regardless of immigration status, sanctuary practices decrease the vulnerability of people who are foreign born, perceived to be foreign born, and are linguistically isolated (Shihadeh and Barranco 2010).

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, although it was the Trump administration that most forcefully vilified sanctuary policies for protecting criminals and increasing crime, former president Obama also famously stated that immigration enforcement should focus on deporting immigrant “felons and not families” (León 2015). This false dichotomy between the “bad” immigrant felon and the “good” immigrant family reproduces a problematic narrative that sees immigrants as a threatening presence that need to be identified, controlled, and expelled from the country, rather than people whose rights need to be protected (Gupta and Altman 2021). The Biden administration continues to promote this false dichotomy (Gupta and Altman 2021). By excluding entire groups of people based on citizenship or perceived citizenship, a perception that is shaped by race, class, and gender stereotypes (Flores and Ariela Schachter., 2018), the United States risks creating a precarious class that does not have full access to services and resources necessary for successful participation in modern society.

The risk of social and economic exclusion and marginalization has been well documented, and has been conceptualized as segmented assimilation theory (Portes et al. 2005; Waters and Jiménez 2005). Depending on group characteristics, paired with the openness of the receiving context, the biggest risk for immigrants is to assimilate “down”, and integrate into a marginalized, racialized, and criminalized population at the bottom rungs of society (Portes et al., 2005; Ziller et al. 2019). By creating policies of racialized surveillance and exclusion from social, economic, and political institutions, federal and sub federal governments create and accelerate processes of isolation and marginalization, which increases the risk of downward assimilation. In this light, it is likely that local immigration policies have an uneven impact on community safety along race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nativity lines.

Aggregate measures of crime used in this paper do not allow for this type of analysis, but future research should consider at least three avenues of inquiry. First, how local policy impacts victim/offender characteristics. Second, whether and how city and state level power structures enable or constrain immigrant social and political participation, and the extent to which this is related to public safety. Third, how systems that marginalize, exclude, and exploit immigrants are maintained and perpetuated through political projects. Who is benefiting from these policies and discourse? What are they gaining?

To conclude, my research joins an emerging body of work that highlights the importance of immigrant-friendly sanctuary practices for public safety. Policy makers in immigrant receiving countries should consider the extensive risk that comes with systematic exclusion and marginalization of certain groups of people by simultaneously increasing vulnerability, rewarding local law enforcement for racially biased policing practices, and curtailing the ability of law enforcement agents to respond to calls for service.

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