

# Public Opposition to Sanctuary Cities in Texas: Criminal Threat or Immigration Threat?\*

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*Objectives.* To assess predictors of sanctuary city attitudes in Texas. Specifically, to assess whether a criminal threat or immigration threat hypothesis better explains attitudes toward sanctuary cities. *Methods.* Pooled representative sample surveys of Texas respondents conducted during the first half of 2017, combined with county-level Census and crime data. Regression analysis and Monte Carlo simulations. *Results.* Compared to the criminal threat hypothesis (as measured by county change in crime rates), the immigration threat hypothesis (as measured by Latino growth and Latino population) better explains Texans' attitudes toward sanctuary cities. *Conclusions.* Despite elite and media narratives linking sanctuary cities to crime, respondents' attitudes toward sanctuary cities are unrelated to physical crime threat and are structured by localized experience with immigration—specifically—Latino growth.

Opponents of sanctuary city policies, which forbid local officials and law enforcement from inquiring into immigration status, frequently base their opposition on crime concerns.<sup>1</sup> Both President Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions have suggested on numerous occasions that sanctuary policies lead to increased crime, despite evidence to the contrary (Gonzalez, Collingwood, and El-Khatib, 2017; Wong, 2017; Lyons, Vélez, and Santoro, 2013; Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez, 2017). On February 5, 2017, in an interview with Bill O'Reilly, Trump claimed that sanctuary policies “breed crime,” a claim he had made frequently both on the campaign trail and in the first months of his presidency.<sup>2</sup> On March 27, 2017, the Attorney General claimed: “Countless Americans would be alive today and countless loved ones would not be grieving today if these policies of sanctuary cities were ended.”<sup>3</sup>

As the national sanctuary city rhetoric has intensified, a robust debate has emerged at the state level, with approximately 150 bills related to sanctuary cities introduced into state legislatures in the first half of 2017 alone (Collingwood, El-Khatib, and O'Brien, 2017).<sup>4</sup> Perhaps no state received as much media attention in 2017 for its anti-sanctuary city stance than did Texas. The Texas Republican Party (GOP) staunchly opposes sanctuary policies

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<sup>1</sup>The appendix, data, and replication code are available on the corresponding author's website at the following link under the replication heading: (<https://www.collingwoodresearch.com/data.html>).

<sup>2</sup>See (<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2017/feb/05/fact-checking-donald-trumps-interview-w-bill-oreilly/>).

<sup>3</sup>See (<https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-jeff-sessions-delivers-remarks-sanctuary-jurisdictions>).

<sup>4</sup>See (<http://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/sanctuary-policy-faq635991795.aspx>).

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and has taken an increasingly tough stance on immigration, emphasizing enforcement, deportation, and greater border security. On May 7, 2017, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed SB4 into law, which bans sanctuary policies in the state and attaches criminal penalties to noncooperation with Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) by local officials. SB4 also allows local police to inquire into immigration status, which some have argued could lead to racial profiling.<sup>5</sup> Abbott's defense of the bill relied on a narrative of immigrant criminality, with the governor stating during the Facebook live stream of its signing: "Legal immigration is different from harboring people who have committed dangerous crimes. Those policies are sanctuary city policies and won't be tolerated in Texas."<sup>6</sup>

The debate in Texas affords an opportunity to examine two competing public opinion hypotheses. On the one hand, given that opponents of sanctuary cities base their opposition in crime narratives, we might expect to see the most opposition to sanctuary policies among respondents who are fearful of and concerned about crime, or those living in high-crime areas. Those who live in these areas may disproportionately bear the brunt of violence, so therefore may be more attuned to elite crime messaging. Elites and media tend to exaggerate the threat of victimhood (Eschholz, 1997; Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz, 2000; Chiricos, Eschholz, and Gertz, 1997; Simon, 2006) and local residents often take their cues from these sources (Barak, 1994; Beckett, 1999; Chandler and Tsai, 2001).<sup>7</sup> This crime hypothesis therefore suggests that respondents who see crime as the most important issue in Texas or who live in high-crime counties should be most opposed to sanctuary cities, if opposition is truly based on concerns about crime.

On the other hand, public opposition to sanctuary cities may have less to do with actual crime exposure or fear of victimhood, and more to do with the *perceived* criminal threat from the Latino population—particularly because the debate has been marked by the killing of a white American by an undocumented Mexican immigrant (Key, 1949; Abrajano and Hajnal, 2015; Tolbert and Grummel, 2003; Campbell, Wong, and Citrin, 2006; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay, 2008). Anti-immigrant attitudes have been shown to be driven by the perceived threat posed by immigrant groups (Fetzer, 2000; Wilson, 2001; Stephan et al., 2005; Masuoka and Junn, 2013). These threat perceptions may be economic, cultural, criminal, or some combination of these, but overall lead to more restrictive immigration attitudes (Gonzalez O'Brien, 2018; Stephan, Ybarra, and Bachman, 1999; Stephan et al., 2005; Fetzer, 2000; Zarate et al., 2004; Wilson, 2001; Citrin and Sides, 2008; Buckler, Swatt, and Salinas, 2009; Stupi, Chiricos, and Gertz, 2014; Hawley, 2003; Lu and Nicholson-Crotty, 2010; Citrin et al., 1997; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior, 2004; Schildkraut, 2010). Given the clear association between sanctuary cities and Latinos, opposition—particularly white opposition—may be grounded in variables indicating a looming Latino presence, such as growth of the Latino population within a respondents' local jurisdiction (Newman and Velez, 2014; Newman, Shah, and Collingwood, 2018). Due to the recent debate and controversy surrounding these cities, the triggering of criminal threat perceptions is an especially viable possibility, as Hopkins (2010), Valentino, Hutchings, and White (2002), and Newman, Shah, and Collingwood (2018) have shown that political elites can activate latent racial hostilities for political ends. We thus examine whether Texan opposition to sanctuary cities is driven by genuine concerns about crime, or

<sup>5</sup> See (<https://www.thenation.com/article/texas-sb-4-dramatic-state-crackdown-yet-sanctuary-cities/>).

<sup>6</sup> See (<http://www.npr.org/2017/05/08/527452803/texas-gov-greg-abbott-signs-controversial-sanctuary-cities-law>).

<sup>7</sup> See Unfortunately we do not have an individual-level measure of media exposure in the data, but research shows that individual concern/fear of crime is correlated with media exposure to crime (Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz, 2000); thus our measure of crime importance is assumed to correlate with media exposure.

is a general reaction to immigration threat perceptions triggered by the size or growth of the local Latino population. If the latter, then opposition is most plausibly driven by negative stereotypes of criminality about Latino immigrants. Indeed, approximately one-third of the American public believes that Latino immigrants are more likely to increase crime or be involved with drugs or gangs (Gonzalez O'Brien, 2018; Masuoka and Junn, 2013a).

While findings in Texas may not generalize to other states and localities, there are several good reasons to focus on this state as a starting point for understanding the contours of sanctuary public opinion generally, and to test our hypotheses specifically. First, Texas passed arguably the most controversial and punitive anti-sanctuary law in 2017, with a well-publicized debate (which we review below). Thus, opinions on sanctuary cities are likely to be a lot more acute and crystallized, improving measurement. Second, Texas has a longstanding and growing Latina/o population; therefore, our analysis is less likely to be susceptible to outliers (i.e., one county with high Latina/o growth driving the findings) that might be found in states with smaller Latina/o populations. Third, Texas is the second largest state in the country and represents a racial/ethnic battleground of sorts, where white Anglos are no longer the majority but are searching for legal/institutional ways to maintain the existing racial hierarchy (Masuoka and Junn, 2013b). We can learn a lot about sanctuary-city/immigration politics with a particular focus on Texas. At the same time, given Texas's longstanding Latina/o (and largely Mexican-American) population, and given that out-group growth rate tends to stimulate greater opposition relative to existing out-group size (Newman and Velez, 2014), Texas provides a hard test for the immigrant growth hypothesis. Existing Anglo-white populations are mostly already accustomed to living around Latinos and so anti-immigrant backlash is, on its face, less likely to occur.

In the pages that follow, we review the relevant literature on immigration threat, crime, and public opinion. Next, we flesh out the contours of the Texas sanctuary city debate before analyzing two representative Texas polls fielded during the first half of 2017, combined with contextual county-level data, to examine reasons for opposition to sanctuary policies. We include several robustness checks to ensure the validity of our findings and conclude with a discussion of the results and avenues for future research.

## Background

Claims of immigrant criminality are nothing new and are in fact as old as the nation itself. Before Latino immigrants became the subject of the immigrant-as-criminal narrative, immigrant criminality was applied more broadly to the foreign born and in the 19th and early 20th centuries to the Irish, Italians, and Chinese. A 1931 note in the *Michigan Law Review* pointed out that “the continued indictment for criminality of those just arrived is as old as the history of our country, and has been directed, during each period, with greatest vehemence against that national group whose migration here has been most recent and most marked. The Irish, Germans, Italians, and Mexicans, to mention only some of the outstanding cases, have each in turn been charged with a high susceptibility to crime” (Cohen, 1931). Mexicans became the specific target of this narrative following the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924, which achieved a long-standing goal of immigration restrictionists in significantly reducing immigration from southern and eastern Europe (Ngai, 2004; Tichenor, 2002). In 1924, the Border Patrol was formed to police the U.S. Mexico border and in 1929 undocumented entry and reentry was formally criminalized under Senate Bill 5094. This formal criminalization linked the longstanding political rhetoric of criminality to undocumented entry and the formal treatment of Mexican immigrants in the United States (Gonzalez O'Brien, 2018).

This undocumented immigration criminalization is reflected in the modern sanctuary city debate and the reliance on immigrant criminality narratives emanating from the Trump Administration and Governor Abbott to justify sanctuary city bans. Fear of crime tends to increase punitive attitudes toward crime control, even when controlling for a host of demographic factors (Dowler, 2003; Costelloe, Chiricos, and Gertz, 2009; Stinchcombe et al., 1980; Hogan, Chiricos, and Gertz, 2005). Studies show that those who see crime as an important issue facing the nation are more attitudinally punitive (Stinchcombe et al., 1980; Hogan, Chiricos, and Gertz, 2005). We therefore expect those who see crime as the most important issue facing Texas to oppose sanctuary policies.

However, fear of crime is often not driven by actual crime rates, but instead the incorrect conflation of actual crime and minority population size. Quillian and Pager (2010) found that white respondents' ability to estimate their likelihood of being the victim of burglary or robbery was very poor when compared to the actual risk based on crime rates in their local area. Instead, perceived risk was significantly associated with the percent black or Latino when controlling for other geographic characteristics, despite the fact that this was not associated with actual risk. In Seattle, Drakulich (2012) found that whites who thought Latinos were likely to be involved in drugs or gangs had more anxiety that they could be the victim of burglary in areas with larger numbers of Latino residents. While this finding may not be directly generalizable to Texas, it does suggest that immigration threat may be based on negative stereotypes of Latino criminality that lead to a fear of victimhood, rather than actual crime rates.

### **The Setting: Texas**

Texas has the second largest population in the United States, as well as the second largest Latino population.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, Texas politics has been dominated by Republicans since 2003 (Wright, 2017). Governor Greg Abbott has been particularly tough on sanctuary policies specifically, in what is somewhat of a break with his Republican predecessors. Despite the size of the Latino population in Texas, in 2016 Latinos comprised only 19 percent of total turnout in the general election. Anglo whites represented more than 65 percent of the votes cast despite only making up 43 percent of the population.<sup>9</sup> This helps to explain why Texas, despite its demographics, has seen some of the toughest rhetoric by politicians on sanctuary cities and undocumented immigrants more broadly.

Another interesting component to Texas's charged sanctuary debate is that there are actually no sanctuary cities in the Lone Star state. The closest approximations are Dallas and Travis counties, where local law enforcement has declined to honor some ICE detainees and that Abbott targeted for criticism in the period leading up to his signing of SB4.<sup>10</sup>

While Republicans control both Texas chambers, House Democrats were very clear what they thought about Senate Bill 4, labeling it "intentionally racist." Democratic Representative Harold Dutton, Jr. compared SB4 to past pieces of legislation now seen as expressions of racism.<sup>11</sup> Passions ran so high that on May 29, 2017, Republican Rep. Matt Rinaldi called ICE to report (undocumented) protesters in the capitol building. An

<sup>8</sup> See (<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/ii-ranking-latino-populations-in-the-states/>).

<sup>9</sup> See (<https://www.texasmonthly.com/burka-blog/latinos-wont-turn-texas-blue-anytime-soon/>).

<sup>10</sup> See (<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/immigration/2017/03/20/travis-county-denied-bulk-nations-immigrant-detainer-requests-fueling-sanctuary-cities-debate>); (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-texas-immigration-idUSKCN0SU09M20151105>).

<sup>11</sup> See (<https://www.texastribune.org/2017/04/27/tensions-flaring-house-members-will-debate-anti-sanctuary-city-bill/>).

exchange between Rinaldi and Democrat Poncho Nevarez escalated to the point that Rep. Nevarez pushed Rep. Rinaldi, with the latter then threatening to shoot Nevarez in self-defense. Afterward, Nevarez reported that he was “sick of” attitudes toward Latinos and reported that another member of the legislature had told him “[t]hose aren’t Americans up there” in regard to the protesters in the gallery.<sup>12</sup> Thus, studying Texans’ public opinion on sanctuary cities is a great place to begin to understand the factors shaping attitudes on this increasingly hotly contested issue.

## Hypotheses

In this section, we lay out four sets of hypotheses. The first set comprises the *immigration threat* hypothesis, where sanctuary opposition is hypothesized to be driven by county-level immigration and ethnic characteristics. Specifically, (1) Latino growth, and (2) Latino population size covary with opposition to sanctuary cities.

A second hypothesis also investigates individual-level immigration concerns.<sup>13</sup> Both polls ask voters which issue is the most important in Texas. If voters’ sanctuary attitudes are guided by immigration threat, respondents who say immigration is the most important issue should also tend to oppose sanctuary policies.

However, sanctuary city opponents often couch their arguments in a crime narrative they claim is divorced from race. If true, respondents living in high-crime areas might strongly oppose sanctuary cities. If voters internalize contextual experiences accordingly, then change in county-level murder rates and total crime rates should covary with opposition to sanctuary cities. We call this the *physical criminal threat* hypothesis.

As with the immigration threat hypotheses, we include an individual-level measure of crime concern (as opposed to individual crime victimization experience, which is not available in the data). If fear of crime, independent of a reaction to the local immigrant/Latino population, really is what is driving opposition to sanctuary cities, respondents who say crime is the most important problem in Texas should disproportionately oppose sanctuary cities. The following four hypotheses are therefore generated:

- **H1A:** Immigration Threat (Latino Growth): Respondents living in counties undergoing rapid Latino growth will be more opposed to sanctuary cities relative to respondents living in low-Latino-growth counties.
- **H1B:** Immigration Threat (Latino Population): Respondents living in high-Latino areas will express greater opposition to sanctuary cities compared to respondents living further away from such areas.
- **H2:** Immigration Threat (Individual Level): Respondents who say immigration is the most important issue will be more opposed to sanctuary cities than will respondents who do not say immigration is the most important issue.
- **H3A:** Physical Crime Threat (Murder): Respondents living in areas where the murder rate has increased over time will be less supportive of sanctuary cities than respondents living in areas where the murder rate has not increased over time.

<sup>12</sup>See (<http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2017/05/31/immigration-debate-texas-lawmakers-scuffle/>).

<sup>13</sup>While these individual items (sanctuary city opinion and immigration most important issue) are possibly endogenous, the “most important issue” was asked first in both surveys. Moreover, immigration has long been a major issue within the state, as UT polls from June 2014 and both February and November, 2015, show that 15–17 percent of voters thought immigration was the most important issue in Texas—the same distribution from the 2017 UT poll.

- **H3B:** Physical Crime Threat (Total): Respondents living in areas where the total crime rate has increased over time will be less supportive of sanctuary cities than respondents living in areas where the total crime rate has not increased over time.
- **H4:** Crime Threat (Individual Level): Respondents who say crime/drugs is the most important issue will be more opposed to sanctuary cities than will respondents who do not say crime/drugs is the most important issue.

## Data and Methods

Very few publicly available surveys with sanctuary city questions exist. However, in 2017, two Texas polls in February and April surveyed views on sanctuary cities. Both polls include many similar variables, including geographic indicators. We therefore pool the data sets and tag on relevant county-level contextual variables.<sup>14</sup> The first survey is the Texas Tribune/University of Texas statewide poll; fielded February 3–10, 2017, with overall  $n = 1,200$ . The survey is an online opt-in panel fielded by Yougov, a firm that uses a well-established and reliable propensity score matching algorithm that balances the sample on age, gender, education, ideology, party identification, and race/ethnicity to create a representative sample (Vavreck and Rivers, 2008).

The second survey is the Texas Lyceum Poll, a telephone statewide survey of  $n = 1,000$  respondents fielded between April 3–9, 2017. A dummy variable captures any variance due to data collection.<sup>15</sup> Our dependent variable is asked slightly differently in the two surveys; therefore, we code the variable into 1 = Support sanctuary cities, 0 = Oppose sanctuary cities.<sup>16</sup> The polls' question wordings are located in Appendix A. We estimate a series of logistic regression models.<sup>17</sup> However, because statistical packages' reported coefficient estimates tend to produce coefficients inconsistent with the logistic S curve functional form, we discuss our results using Monte Carlo simulation first differences techniques (Long and Freese, 2006; King, 1998).

We include two individual-level items to assess Hypotheses 2 and 4, respectively. These are dummy variables that measure the most important issue in the state (1 = immigration, 0 = not immigration; 1 = crime/drugs, 0 = not crime/drugs). In addition, we include several control variables, including party identification, ideology, race/ethnicity, education, gender, and urbanity.<sup>18</sup> All coding is shown in the Appendix.

<sup>14</sup>The Lyceum Poll does include a small percentage of nonvoters. Table B4 in the Appendix excludes the few nonregistered voters. The results do not substantively change.

<sup>15</sup>Given that the surveys were separated by a few months, the univariate sanctuary distributions do vary from poll to poll. In the February UT Poll, just 37 percent of respondents supported sanctuary cities, whereas 63 percent opposed. In April, the Lyceum Poll recorded 48 percent support, 52 percent oppose. These differences may be due to calling house/mode effects, wording effects, and attitude change across time related to a rapidly changing media and political environment (Schuman and Presser, 1996; Tesler, 2015).

<sup>16</sup>Key descriptive statistics and sample demographics are presented in Tables A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

<sup>17</sup>We combine the two surveys together to maximize power, as we expect a significant amount of noise in our contextual measures and so therefore need to draw on a large sample. However, doing so, we recognize the two dependent variables' relationships with our key independent variables are not necessarily the same given question wording variation. We checked this by disaggregating the two data sets and estimating identical models. Given the smaller sample size, the contextual variables' statistical significance drops as expected. However, the relationships between our dependent variable and key independent variables show patterns across the two surveys supportive of a "racial threat" interpretation. The effects for "racial threat" are consistent and in the expected direction across both polls, whereas the effects for crime are fairly erratic, indicating statistical uncertainty. Table B1 in the Appendix presents the minimum to maximum results for our key variables.

<sup>18</sup>We code party identification as 1 = Democrat, 2 = Independent/Other, 3 = Republican. However, we include a party ID dummied model in the Appendix (see Table B7), treating Independent/Other as the comparison group. Substantive findings remain unchanged.

We include four variables to test our contextual hypotheses (H1 and H3). For immigration threat (H1A), Latino growth measures the percentage change in the county-level Latino population from 2000 (Census) to 2010/2014 (American Community Survey).<sup>19</sup> To test H1B, we include percent Latino in the county as determined by the combined 2010–2014 ACS. In Texas, immigrant threat is most likely conflated with Latino threat. While less than half of the Latino population in the United States is foreign born, and recent growth is due primarily to birth rates not immigration,<sup>20</sup> a strong link between Latinos and immigration persists in the mass media (Valentino, Brader, and Jardina, 2013), and in many Americans' minds (Pérez, 2010). It is likely that the average American does not differentiate his or her response to observing native-born versus foreign-born Latino population growth (Rocha et al., 2011). Further, we opt for Percent Latino Change and Percent Latino as our measures of immigrant threat because the target/perceived target of sanctuary cities is primarily the Latino population.

For criminal threat (H3), we gathered Texas crime statistics<sup>21</sup> from the Texas Department of Public Safety (2015), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting program 2000 county-level data set.<sup>22</sup> We select murder rate by county (H2A), and total crime rate by county (H2B),<sup>23</sup> scaling each measure to crimes per 100,000 people. We select the same measures from 2000, creating a percent change measure ( $[(2015-2000)/2000]$ ).<sup>24</sup>

## Results

Table 1 presents initial tests of our four hypotheses.<sup>25</sup> We find strong support for Hypotheses 1A and 1B, and no support for Hypotheses 3A and 3B. Both immigration threat—growth (H1A) and size (H1B)—are statistically associated with decreases in support for sanctuary cities.<sup>26</sup> However, the “Change in Murder rate 2000 – 2015” and “Change in Total Crime Rate 2000 – 2015” coefficients in Table 1 fail to achieve statistical significance; thus, these results do not support H3A and H3B.

Next, we evaluate the individual-level immigration-threat hypothesis (H2—immigration most important issue) and the crime concern hypothesis (H4—crime/drugs most important issue). Coefficients in Table 1 indicate that both variables are statistically significant and negative. Voters who think either immigration or crime, respectively, are the most important issue in Texas are also less supportive of sanctuary cities. These findings support both hypotheses.

To ease interpretation we present Monte Carlo simulation plots of our main independent variables in Figures 1 and 2. The two left panels in Figure 1 assess Hypothesis 1. Moving

<sup>19</sup>These data are compiled from interviews each year between 2010 and 2014 and averaged over this window to provide accurate estimates at the county level. This measure is consistent with leading research on ethnic/immigrant change, including Citrin, Reingold, and Green (1990), Green, Strolovitch, and Wong (1998), Alexseev (2006), Hopkins (2010), Newman (2013), and Newman, Shah, and Collingwood (2018).

<sup>20</sup>See (<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2014/04/29/hispanic-nativity-shift/>).

<sup>21</sup>See ([http://www.dps.texas.gov/administration/crime\\_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm](http://www.dps.texas.gov/administration/crime_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm)).

<sup>22</sup>Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data [United States]: County-Level Detailed Arrest and Offense Data, 2000 (ICPSR 3451)

<sup>23</sup>Total crime: murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, and vehicle theft.

<sup>24</sup>We also estimate models with just 2015 crime data; our main results hold. We include these estimates in Appendix Table B2.

<sup>25</sup>We also estimated the model among registered voters only; results remain unchanged. See Table B4 in the Appendix.

<sup>26</sup>Table B6 in the Appendix also includes county percent black and percent black growth. Neither variable is statistically significant; our substantive findings do not change.

TABLE 1

Model Predictors of Approval for Sanctuary Cities: "Do You Support or Oppose 'Sanctuary Cities?'" Table Provides Support for the Immigration Threat Hypotheses (Percent Latino Growth, Percent Latino), No Support for the Physical Criminal Threat Hypotheses (Change in Murder Rate; Change in Total Crime Rate), and Support for the Individual Immigration and Criminal Threat, Respectively, Hypotheses

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>
	sanc-approve
Party ID (Dem-Ind-Rep)	-1.031*** (0.098)
Ideology (lib-mod-cons)	-1.067*** (0.083)
Black	-0.425** (0.176)
Hispanic	0.483*** (0.169)
Female	0.036 (0.120)
Age	-0.016*** (0.004)
Education (low-high)	0.217*** (0.061)
Geo: Urban	0.186 (0.132)
Income: 40–150K	0.178 (0.140)
Income: 150K+	0.286 (0.218)
Income missing	-0.062 (0.202)
<b>Pct. Latino growth: 2000–2014</b>	-0.010** (0.004)
<b>Pct. Latino 2014</b>	-0.010** (0.005)
<b>Change in murder rate 2000–2015</b>	-0.115 (0.096)
<b>Change in total crime rate 2000–2015</b>	0.037 (0.270)
<b>Immigration most important issue</b>	-0.919*** (0.175)
<b>Crime/drugs most important issue</b>	-0.841* (0.459)
UT Poll dummy	-0.457*** (0.124)
Constant	4.719*** (0.479)
Observations	2,042
Log Likelihood	-918.882
Akaike inf. crit.	1,875.763
Pseudo $R^2$	0.359

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

along the x-axis from left-to-right (minimum to maximum independent variable values), as Latino growth increases, respondents shift from a 0.47 probability of supporting sanctuaries to a 0.08 probability. On Latino population size, the effects shift from a probability of 0.41 (minimum Latino population) to a probability of 0.22 (maximum Latino population). These dramatic effects provide clear evidence that immigration threat drives opposition to sanctuary city policy.<sup>27</sup>

The two rightmost panels in Figure 1 evaluate the physical criminal threat hypotheses (H3A and H3B). The top-right plot shows no statistical or significant relationship between change in county murder rate and sanctuary city attitude. The bottom-right plot (change in total crime rate) clearly reveals no relationship between actual change in county crime and attitudes about sanctuary cities. Taken together these findings reject H3A and H3B.

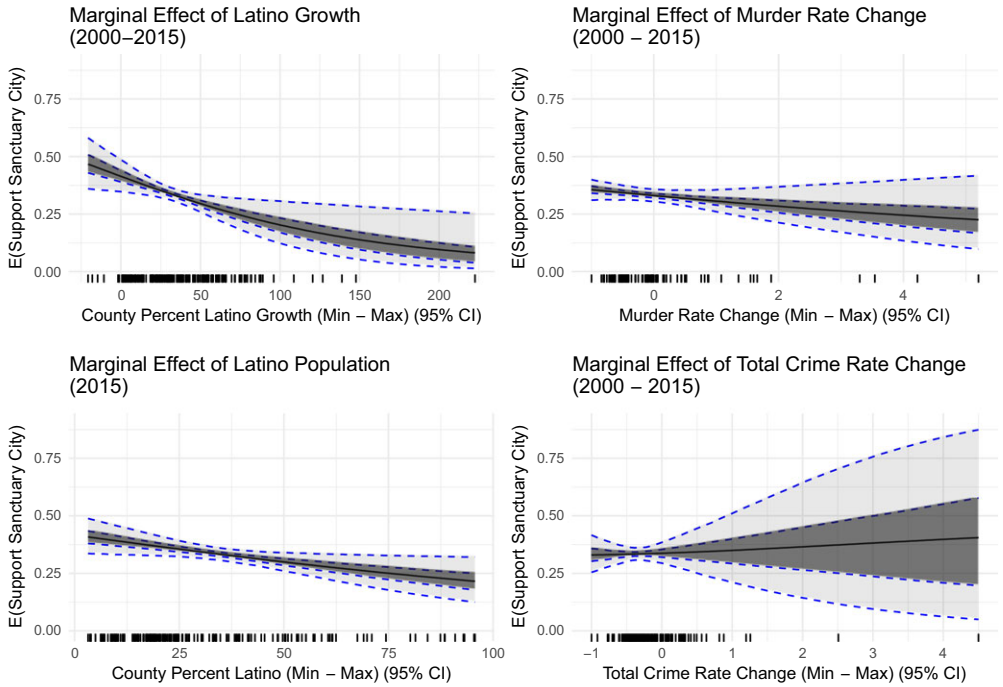
The top panel in Figure 2 shows the effects for immigration as the most important issue, whereas the bottom panel shows the effects for crime as the most important issue.

<sup>27</sup>We perform the same simulation using a more conservative first difference approach based on a one-standard deviation below the independent variable mean to one-standard deviation above the mean. Table 2 presents the results for all analyses, which corroborate our minimum to maximum results.



FIGURE 1

Simulations Predicting Support for Sanctuary Cities, Based on Four County-Level Predictors: Latino Growth, Latino Population Size, Murder Rate Change, Total Crime Rate Change; Simulations Based off Table 1 Model; Models Control for Party ID, Ideology, Education, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Income, and Survey House; DV: Thinking About Your Own View, Do You Support or Oppose “Sanctuary Cities”?



Respondents’ first difference expected support for sanctuary cities moves from 0.37 to 0.19 for immigration and 0.33 to 0.19 for crime. While these support both hypotheses (H2 and H4), the relationship is more uncertain for the crime variable. The standard deviation change (Table 2) reveals a 16-point net jump for immigration and just a 5-point jump for crime. Clearly, individual-level attitudes about immigration are most strongly associated with support for or opposition to sanctuary cities.

We also estimated Anglo white, black, and Latino split-sample models, respectively. Based on the literature (Parker and Barreto, 2014; Hofstadter, 2012; Tesler, 2016; Mendelberg, 2001; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay, 2008), we might expect immigration threat variables to predict sanctuary city opposition for Anglos but not necessarily for other groups. Table 3 presents the results for this analysis. Among Anglo respondents, neither change in murder rate, nor change in total crime rate or seeing crime as the most important issue facing Texas, influenced public opinion on sanctuary cities. However, the coefficients for Latino growth and immigration as the most important issue maintained statistical and substantive significance. Although blacks are disproportionately opposed to sanctuary cities at the mean, their opposition is based less on a sense of contextual “immigration threat,” as “immigration as the most important issue” is the only statistically significant threat variable for this group. For Latinos, only party and ideology predict sanctuary city attitudes.

FIGURE 2

Simulations Predicting Support for Sanctuary Cities, Based on Immigration and Crime, Respectively, as Most Important Issue; Simulations Based off Table 1 Model; Models Control for Party ID, Ideology, Education, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Income, and Survey House; DV: Thinking About Your Own View, Do You Support or Oppose “Sanctuary Cities”?

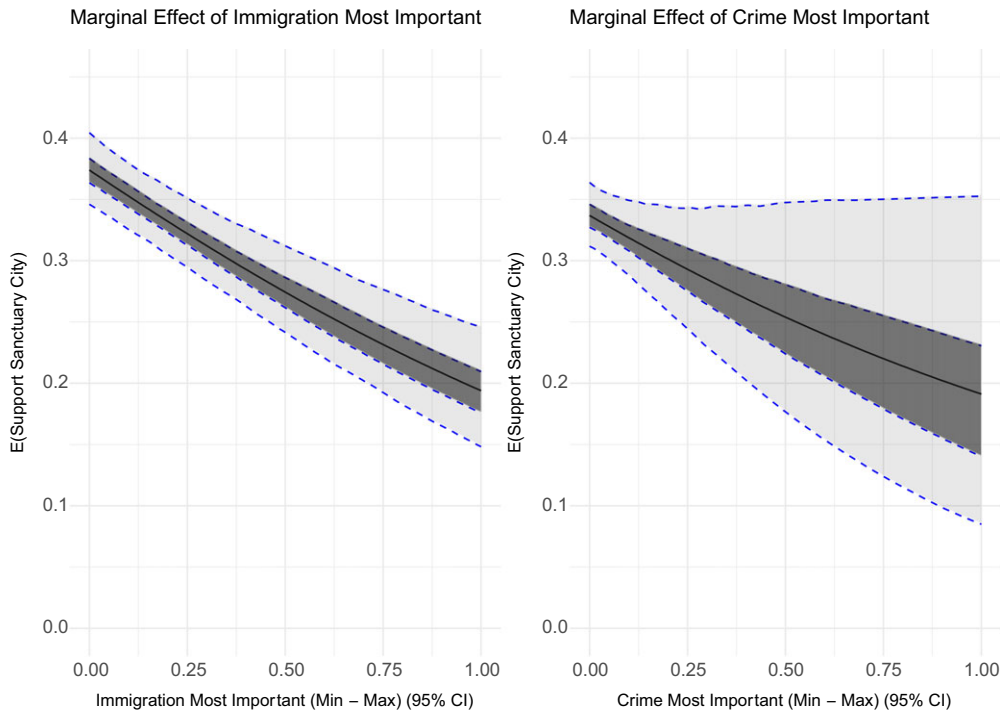


TABLE 2

Monte Carlo Simulated First Difference Point Estimates with 95 Percent Confidence Intervals; Estimates Simulated from the Model Presented in Table 1; The First Difference Results Show Each Variable’s Effects on the Dependent Variable When the Independent Variable is First Set to  $-1$  Standard Deviation Below the Variable’s Mean, and Then Again to 1 Standard Deviation Above the Variable’s Mean

	Point Estimate	Low	High	PE Abs Diff
Latino growth $-1SD$	0.38	0.33	0.43	9
Latino growth $+1SD$	0.29	0.25	0.34	
Latino population $-1SD$	0.37	0.33	0.42	8
Latino population $+1SD$	0.29	0.25	0.34	
Change in murder rate $-1SD$	0.35	0.31	0.39	3
Change in murder rate $+1SD$	0.32	0.28	0.35	
Change in total crime rate $-1SD$	0.33	0.30	0.37	1
Change in total crime rate $+1SD$	0.34	0.30	0.37	
Immigration most important issue $-1SD$	0.42	0.38	0.46	16
Immigration most important issue $+1SD$	0.26	0.22	0.30	
Crime most important issue $-1SD$	0.36	0.32	0.40	5
Crime most important issue $+1SD$	0.31	0.27	0.35	

TABLE 3

Model Predictors of Approval for Sanctuary Cities: “Do You Support or Oppose ‘Sanctuary Cities?’” Beyond Corroborating the Initial Model’s Core Findings, the Table Demonstrates that Immigration Contextual Threat Is Only Present Among Anglo-Whites (Split-Sample Race Model)

	Dependent Variable:		
	White (1)	sanc-approve Black (2)	Latino (3)
Party ID (Dem-Ind-Rep)	-1.029*** (0.145)	0.064 (0.291)	-1.118*** (0.194)
Ideology (lib-mod-cons)	-1.591*** (0.133)	-0.285 (0.184)	-0.420** (0.175)
Female	0.155 (0.178)	-0.155 (0.302)	0.105 (0.261)
Age	-0.017*** (0.006)	-0.007 (0.010)	-0.003 (0.008)
Education (low-high)	0.247*** (0.089)	0.319** (0.160)	0.065 (0.133)
Geo: Urban	0.175 (0.210)	-0.147 (0.310)	0.394 (0.266)
Income: 40–150K	0.153 (0.216)	0.745** (0.349)	0.009 (0.291)
Income: 150K+	0.484 (0.310)	1.114** (0.542)	0.050 (0.576)
Income missing	-0.102 (0.301)	0.706 (0.477)	0.225 (0.532)
Pct. Latino growth: 2000–2014	-0.010* (0.006)	-0.008 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.015)
Pct. Latino 2014	-0.013 (0.009)	-0.0001 (0.015)	-0.004 (0.010)
Change in murder rate 2000–2015	-0.110 (0.138)	0.056 (0.266)	-0.198 (0.219)
Change in total crime rate 2000–2015	0.337 (0.458)	-0.570 (0.874)	0.041 (0.597)
Immigration most important issue	-1.383*** (0.286)	-0.855* (0.482)	-0.315 (0.344)
Crime/drugs most important issue	-0.217 (0.741)	0.344 (0.892)	-16.676 (801.588)
UT Poll dummy	-0.561*** (0.189)	0.262 (0.302)	-0.287 (0.275)
Constant	5.843*** (0.751)	-0.677 (1.292)	3.222*** (1.077)
Observations	1,285	238	347
Log likelihood	-433.336	-149.987	-188.693
Akaike inf. crit.	900.672	333.974	411.386
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.482	0.147	0.260

\**p* < 0.1; \*\**p* < 0.05; \*\*\**p* < 0.01.

**Discussion**

Sanctuary cities have become a widely discussed and debated topic since Donald Trump’s election. Both nationally, and within Texas, Republicans’ goal is to force these cities to comply with ICE detainer requests and cooperate with federal immigration officials, then campaign on Democratic obstructionism. However, sanctuary city proponents maintain that sanctuary policies are useful crime-fighting tools and promote positive benefits for residents, which is consistent with some evidence (Wong, 2017).

In Texas, the debate over sanctuary cities is highly racialized, despite some Republican elected officials trying to pin the fight on crime, not on race or ethnicity. However, we find no support for the *physical crime threat hypothesis*—that is, respondents living in high-crime areas are no more or less supportive of sanctuary cities than are respondents living elsewhere. However, we find very strong evidence for the *immigration threat hypothesis*. Respondents residing in high-Latino-growth counties are disproportionately opposed to sanctuary cities. We also find some evidence that respondents living in

counties with high Latina/o percent also oppose sanctuary cities at greater rates than do their counterparts.

Given extant literature, our findings are perhaps unsurprising: whites disproportionately estimate potential victimhood based on neighborhood racial/ethnic composition and not on actual crime context (Quillian and Pager, 2010; Drakulich, 2012). Indeed, the finding that immigration threat, racial threat (and racial resentment) tend to guide white voting and political behavior is an extremely consistent finding (Key, 1949; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Tesler, 2016; Sears, Hensler, and Speer, 1979; Sears and Kinder, 1985; Sears and Jessor, 1996).

Still, given the saliency and importance of the issue, particularly in Texas, scholars must unpack the specific mechanisms driving attitudes on this issue. Public opinion on sanctuary cities is an area ripe for future research. We hope to expand on the current study through a national survey that will allow us to examine attitudes toward sanctuary cities outside the context of a specific state and see if, as in Texas, public opinion tends to be driven by the size or growth of the local Latino population. In addition, a national study would also let us assess whether opposition to sanctuary cities is similar to opposition to other immigration policies, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival or comprehensive immigration reform. Lastly, it would be intriguing to analyze data from sanctuary cities to examine the level of knowledge residents have about their city's sanctuary status, their support for these policies, and what support or opposition is based on in the cities themselves.

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