



# Public Safety, Integration, and Citizenship: An Analysis of the Policies and Practices of Sanctuary Cities

Anne Tseng, PhD  
Faculty, Department of Sociology  
Douglas College

# Context and background

- Growing body of sociological research on sanctuary cities
- Scope and intensity of immigration enforcement have increased, especially in the interior
  - Devolution of immigration law and the joint-effort model
- Sanctuary cities as jurisdictions that refrain from enforcing federal immigration law
- Research has focused mainly on outcomes related to crime and public safety
- Less attention to role of sanctuary cities as pro-immigrant spaces that potentially shape integration and citizenship

# Defining sanctuary city

Source	Definition
White House (2018)	“a state or local jurisdiction that <b>refuses</b> to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement”
Center for Immigration Studies (2021)	“These cities, counties, and states have laws, ordinances, regulations, resolutions, policies, or other practices that <b>obstruct</b> immigration enforcement and shield criminals from ICE...”
National Immigration Law Center (2018)	“a jurisdiction that has adopted a policy <b>limiting</b> the degree to which local and state law enforcement officers <b>may assist</b> in federal immigration enforcement”

# Defining sanctuary city

Source	Definition
Lyon et al. (2013:9)	“any municipality that has at least one formal resolution limiting local enforcement of immigration laws”
O’Brien et al. (2017:2)	“any city or police department that passed a resolution or ordinance expressly forbidding city or law enforcement officials from inquiring into immigration status and/or cooperation with ICE”
Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez (2021)	“Our measure of sanctuary policy adoption is a dichotomous indicator of the presence (1) or absence (0) of one or more sanctuary policies...”

# Sanctuary Cities as Pro-Immigrant Spaces

- 
- Current definitions and understandings oversimplify the policies and practices of sanctuary cities
  - Immigrant experiences and contexts of receptions are shaped at local levels
    - Areas of underenforcement?
      - Hostile contexts of reception: chilling effects (Armenta 2016; Nguyen and Gill 2015), higher rates of deportation (Becerra et al. 2016), barriers to accessing resources (Cervantes and Menjívar 2020; Goodman 2020; Capps et al. 2002)
    - International interpretations and definitions
      - Education and advocacy; "culture of hospitality" (Squire and Bagelman 2012)
      - Role of private citizens (Bauder 2016; Squire and Bagelman 2012)
      - Access to municipal services in Toronto and Vancouver (Mofette and Ridgley 2018)

# Sanctuary Cities as Pro-Immigrant Spaces

- 
- Current definitions and understandings oversimplify the policies and practices of sanctuary cities
  - Immigrant experiences and contexts of receptions are shaped at local levels
    - Internal bordering and the production of citizenship (Houston 2019; Bauböck 2003)
    - Entitlements to rights and privileges as a resident (Varsanyi 2006)
      - Voting rights for non-citizens
      - Municipal ID programs
      - Bureaucratic incorporation (Jones-Correa 2005)

# Sanctuary Cities as Pro-Immigrant Spaces

- 
- Cities as sites involved in the production of citizenship
    - Urban citizenship vs formal citizenship (Varsanyi 2006; Bauböck 2003)
    - Entitlements to rights and privileges as a resident
      - Voting rights for non-citizens
      - Municipal ID programs
      - Bureaucratic incorporation (Jones-Correa 2005)

# Research Questions

- **What are the intended outcomes that motivate policymakers to implement sanctuary policies?**
- **What are the meanings that policymakers attach to the concept of sanctuary?**

# Methodological Approach

## Content analyses

- 435 documents published between 1979 and 2019 from 210 municipalities in the U.S.
  - Municipal level documents: ordinances, resolutions, executive orders, mayoral statements, media releases
  - Police department documents: policy and procedure manuals, general orders, official statements
  - News articles

## Analyses in NVivo 12

- Deductive coding: trust and cooperation, public safety, immigrant integration, non-enforcement
- Inductive coding: civic engagement, deterrence, multiculturalism

# Findings: Two Dominant Narratives

## **1. Public safety**

- Trust and cooperation
- Quelling immigrant fear
- Conserving municipal resources

# The Public Safety Narrative

---

## Trust and cooperation, quelling immigrant fear

*The Boise Police Department **has worked tirelessly** to develop a Community Policing program to build **solid relationships** between immigrant communities and law enforcement, that are a foundation for a safer and stronger community. (“Boise Welcoming Resolution 71-17” 2017)*

*All people within the city **need to feel safe** to contact local law enforcement or city government and be able to freely access critical public safety services **without fear**. (“Beaverton Resolution 4429” 2017; “Forest Grove Resolution 2017-16” 2017))*

# The Public Safety Narrative

---

## Trust and cooperation, quelling immigrant fear

*The City Council recognizes that fostering a relationship of **trust, respect, and open communication** between City employees and City residents is essential to City departments' core mission of ensuring public safety and serving the needs of the entire community. ("Salinas City Welcoming City Resolution" 2017)*

*Because partnership with Vermont residents is the most effective way to ensure public safety, **maintaining the public's trust** is a primary concern. To secure this trust, personal characteristics, or immigration status, should have no adverse bearing on an individual's treatment in custody. ("Colchester PD General Order 36" 2018)*

# The Public Safety Narrative

---

## Conserving municipal resources

*It is morally appropriate and **fiscally prudent** to focus our **finite City resources** towards addressing and resolving discrete **community concerns** that are governed by the applicable local laws. (“Virginia Resolution No. 2246” 2007)*

*The identification and reporting of immigrants who have been charged much less convicted of any crime **unduly burdens and diverts municipal resources; disrupts and interferes** with the City’s due to **basic municipal services such as health care, education, and police protection.** (“Jersey City Executive Order” 2017)*

# Findings: Two Dominant Narratives

## 2. Local citizenship and membership

- Facilitating access to municipal services
- Recognizing immigrant contributions
- Creating inclusive and welcoming spaces

# Local Citizenship and Membership

---

## Access to municipal resources

*To the fullest extent allowed by federal and state law, immigrants who live within the city limits of Albuquerque and their families **shall have access to all** City services and programs. (“Albuquerque Resolution 00-151” 2001)*

*City employees **serve all residents and make city services accessible to all**, regardless of immigration status...City employees will not require any person seeking or accessing City programs or services to disclose their immigration status . (“Seattle Welcoming City Resolution” 2017)*

# Local Citizenship and Membership

---

## Access to municipal resources

*A person's right to file a police report, participate in police-community activities, or otherwise benefit from police services is **not contingent upon citizenship or immigration status.** (“Bothell PD Policy Procedure Manual BPD-0714” 2017)*

*The City and the Chelsea Police Department are committed to promoting safety and providing proactive **community policing services to all** who are located in our community... We as duly sworn police officers are responsible for providing effective policing services to everyone in the City of Chelsea in an equal, fair, and just manner. (“Chelsea PD Department Manual Policy 1.33” 2015)*

# Local Citizenship and Membership

---

## Recognizing immigrants' contributions

*All people, including immigrants, are **valued contributors** and are **vital to our shared prosperity**. (“Lake Forest Park Resolution 1606” 2017; “Salem Sanctuary for Peace Ordinance” 2017)*

*The City of St. Louis **greatly benefits** from **the many contributions** of its diverse population, including working people, students, immigrants and refugees. (“St. Louis Resolution 273” 2004)*

*Pittsburgh’s growing and thriving immigrant and refugee populations **enhance the city’s social and cultural fabric and boost the city’s economic growth and overall prosperity**. (“Pittsburgh Resolution 1151” 2017)*

# Local Citizenship and Membership

---

## Inclusive and welcoming spaces

*The City of Boise is committed to being a Welcoming City and creating a community where all of our residents feel welcomed, safe, and **able to fully participate in, and contribute to, our city's economic and social life.** (“Boise Welcoming City Resolution 71-17” 2017)*

*We believe in and stand for values of inclusion, equity, and justice...We are **ready to work together with partners, staff, and residents to create a safe, welcoming, equitable, and inclusive community for everyone.** (“Richfield Resolution 11300” 2016)*

# Summary of Findings

---

- Non-enforcement and non-cooperation policies in sanctuary cities can take various approaches
- Sanctuary policies are informed by motivations to promote immigrant inclusion and participation in civic spaces, as well as concerns about public safety
- Narratives of public safety were embedded within objectives to quell immigrant fear and strengthen trust and cooperation between local agencies and residents.
- Narratives of citizenship and membership highlighted the rights, responsibilities, and privileges associated with citizenship.

# Limitations of this Study and Recommendations for Future Research

---

1. Center immigrant experiences
  - Intended outcomes (policymakers) vs lived experiences (immigrants)
2. Examine the "deterrence effect"
  - Do sanctuary city policies raise the costs of immigration enforcement enough to create an area of under-enforcement?
3. Consider sanctuary cities from an international perspective
  - Forces of globalization and immigration

# Recommendations for Policy

---

1. Standardization and coordination of policies and practices
  - Welcoming City Network
  - Updating policies and practices in response to federal developments
2. Strengthen partnerships between communities and sub-federal governments and agencies
  - Equalize partnerships
  - Increase funding
3. Utilize sanctuary policies as a framework for building pro-immigrant spaces
  - Formalize membership and citizenship (eg. Municipal ID programs, voting rights)
  - Bureaucratic incorporation

# Contributions of this Study

---

- Advanced an understanding of sanctuary cities beyond a binary independent variable to inform future operationalization
- Provided in-depth insight into “sanctuary” as a concept, policy, and practice
- Identified the motivations that inform decisions to implement sanctuary city policies and practices
- Introduced new perspectives and angles for studying sanctuary cities as pro-immigrant spaces
- Expanded upon literature on informal citizenships